

# THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 2062.—VOL. LXXX.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 8, 1902.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



A LITTLE STARTLED EXCLAMATION BROKE THE STILLNESS, AND THE FIGURE CAME SWIFTLY FORWARD.

## THE MYSTERY OF THE TOWER

[NOVELETTE]  
(PART ONE.)

### CHAPTER I.

**G**ALBRAITH CASTLE is in H-shire—a fine old, grey-stone building, which has been the home of the Earls of Galbraith since Norman William came over the seas with his victorious host of warriors, and took the lands from the conquered Saxons to bestow them on his own favourite followers.

Many years have passed since then. The suns of many summers, the winds of many winters, have beaten on the old grey walls,

and turreted keep, but the Castle has bravely withstood the test of time; and now, by the addition of another wing, and various modern improvements, it can hold its own, for comfort, with any residence in the United Kingdom.

On this December day—close upon Christmas—it looks bleak and dismal enough outside, for a hard frost has set in; the sky is like blue steel, the ponds are all frozen, the ground is hard and crisp beneath the tread, and the trees in the park are silhouetted against the sky like delicate dark lacework, each tiny twig showing up with perfect distinctness.

A few mistle thrushes are hopping disconsolately about on the look-out for food, and a robin, perched on an evergreen, is trilling out a melancholy little song, that breaks melodiously on the frosty silence.

Indoors the scene is very different. A group of ladies are assembled in the morning-room drinking tea out of fragile cups of Dresden china, and looking all more or less picturesque in their bright velvet or plush gowns, adorned with delicate lace, and dainty ribbon bows.

A huge fire of scented logs burns on the hearth, and casts ruddy shadows upon the rich appointments of the room; big pots of flowers (brought in from the conservatory fresh every morning) are blossoming on tables and stands, and an immense crystal bowl, full of violets, fills the air with the sweetness of their perfume.

At a small table, in front of the silver tea equipage, sits the Countess of Galbraith—a young widow of about thirty, fair-haired, and patrician looking, and by her side is the well-known beauty, Lady Cecile Craven—a girl of

nineteen or twenty summers, with the bluest of blue eyes, the sunniest of golden hair, and the most lovely, kissable mouth that it was ever man's lot to look upon!

"What a bother it is!" she was saying, sympathetically to the Countess. "What shall you do?"

"I'm sure I don't know," rejoined Lady Galbraith. "I suppose I shall have to upset all the arrangements I have made, for of course the poor girl must have somebody to meet her at the station."

"What is your difficulty?" asked a tall young man, sauntering up at that moment, and addressing the hostess. "I can see from your face that you are in some sort of dilemma, and perhaps—who knows?—I may be able to give you some help."

"I'm afraid not. My trouble is beyond your assistance, Bertie, otherwise I should have confided in you before. After all, it is not so very bad," she added, laughing. "The fact is, I'm expecting Blanche's new governess this evening, and I intended to send the dog-cart to meet her at the station. All the other carriages will be in use, you know, because of the ball at Holthorpe; and now Barnes has just sent in to say that the brown mare has sprained her leg, and he is afraid to drive the chestnut."

"I'll drive the chestnut," returned Captain Charlton, quietly. "and I'll meet the governess. There! Now are you satisfied?"

"But you are going to Holthorpe!" exclaimed Lady Cecile, "and the governess does not arrive until eight o'clock, just when you will be dressing!"

"Just when I should be dressing if I were going to the ball," he corrected; "but, as it happens, I am not, consequently I shall be at liberty."

"Not going to the ball?" repeated the Countess, in surprise. "Why not?"

"Because Adeline is not well enough, or fancies she is not well enough, to go, and I can hardly leave her."

"What nonsense!" Cecile exclaimed, while Lady Galbraith added:

"I really do not see the necessity. Adeline is not seriously ill, and she has her maid. Still, breaking off abruptly, of course, you know best, and you must do as you please."

"Thank you!" he returned, bowing gravely. "In that case I will do myself the honour of escorting your governess back to the Castle, and I hope—as a reward for my benevolence—the lady will turn out to be young and pretty. It is the least return she can make me."

"The very least," acquiesced Cecile. "But"—turning laughingly to Lady Galbraith—"do you think it will be quite proper to allow Captain Charlton to chaperon the governess? We are all aware of his propensities, and who knows but what, before their return to the Castle, he may have turned the poor girl's head for ever and aye by his wicked compliments?"

"You are too bad, Lady Cecile! I have never paid you any compliments."

"Because I would not give you the chance."

"No; for the much better reason that perfection is beyond the reach of compliment."

"Listen to him!" Lady Cecile cried, still laughing, and holding up her finger in arch rebuke. "He is absolutely incorrigible. I really think, Lady Galbraith, that he ought to be prevented from going to the station."

"But I have no alternative," sighed the Countess. "The chestnut is the only horse available, and nothing would induce Barnes to drive him, so that Bertie is a 'pis aller.' Besides," she added, in a different tone, and with a kindly glance at the handsome young soldier, "I think I can trust him, especially when he knows that the governess is an orphan—quite friendless, and alone in the world."

Charlton made no reply; and just then the trib were joined by a tall, dark man of nearer thirty—handsome, but grave, and more sedate than his years seemed to warrant. This was the Honourable Ronald Galbraith, the younger

brother of the late Earl, and guardian of his only son, the present boy Earl.

As he came up the faintest possible flush drifted into Lady Cecile's cheek, and for a moment her long, fringed lids drooped, then she raised her blue eyes to his.

"Have you altered your mind, Mr. Galbraith, and decided on going to the ball to-night?" she asked, taking up a screen of ostrich feathers so as to shield her face from the blaze of the fire.

He hesitated for a moment before replying.

"I think not, Lady Cecile. Balls, as you know, are not in my line."

The girl's scarlet lips curved into a half-amused pout.

"I suppose you mean you despise them, and think we, who go to them, mere frivolous butterflies, fit for nothing else."

"Indeed," Ronald Galbraith responded, with a slight smile, "I think nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I envy you your power of enjoyment, and wish I could emulate it."

"There is no reason why you shouldn't."

He sighed, and looked into the fire without replying. There was something strangely subdued and quiet about him that frequently made people wonder whether his life held some secret trouble, which had sapped his youth, and made him old before his time. Cecile often found herself speculating on the possibility, and perhaps this accounted for the interest she took in him.

"Will nothing tempt you?" she said presently, very softly—her voice lowered so that he only heard the words. "Suppose—someone—very much wished you to go, what should you say?"

"It would depend on who the 'someone' was," he rejoined, promptly; and then, after a slight hesitation, he came a step nearer, and bent his head closer to hers. "Do you mean, Lady Cecile, that my going or remaining away is of the smallest possible moment to you?"

Again those long curly lashes swept her cheek. When she raised them, there was a spice of coquetry in her glance.

"I did not say that, Mr. Galbraith."

"No; but I fancied—I hoped—that you might have meant it."

He looked at her eagerly, and it was strange how completely his face altered under the influence of the new expression upon it. He was animated—hopeful—youthful by ten years than he had been five minutes ago.

Cecile remained silent. A coquette to her finger-tips, she would have been untrue to her training if she had let him see what she really felt; and yet the presence of Ronald Galbraith affected her too deeply to allow her to practise upon him those pretty little feminine wiles which she would have had no scruples in showing off to any other man.

"I beg your pardon," Galbraith said, drawing back, with a shadow of constraint in his tone. "I am afraid I have been led away by my vanity into imagining a very absurd thing. My presence or absence at Holthorpe to-night cannot possibly make the slightest difference to you—and I was a fool for thinking otherwise."

"Were you?" Lady Cecile said. "I'm not so sure about that"—and then, without looking to see how he received this declaration, she sprang up with the lightness of a bird, and ran across the room to the recess of the window, holding back the drapery with one hand, while she gazed down on the terrace below, where two or three of the male visitors, who had just returned from a day's shooting, were holding a final colloquy with the game-keeper regarding the next day's arrangements.

Presently the door of the morning-room was opened, and a head thrust inside.

"May we come in, Lady Galbraith?" said the head. "We are very dirty, and very unpicturesque, but we are tired, and a cup of tea would be nectar itself."

"Come in, by all means," the Countess returned, and the permission was followed by

the entrance of four gentlemen in knickerbockers and shooting-jackets, the last of whom immediately made his way up to the window-recess, where Cecile—a tall, graceful figure, in a wonderful tea-gown of palest green plush, and a knot of yellow roses fastened in her bosom—still stood, gazing out into the gathering darkness.

"Watching for me, Lady Cecile?" said the new-comer. "That is kind of you. Believe me, I am duly grateful."

She turned round, and faced him sharply.

"Your gratitude is thrown away, Mr. Borlase, for you were certainly not in my thoughts."

He bowed, and smiled rather mockingly. Sydney Borlase was generally considered a handsome man; but people said his smile reminded them of Mephistopheles. He certainly looked rather like the spirit of evil at the present moment, for he was a gentleman unaccustomed to "snubs" such as Cecile had just administered.

"Then I envy the person who was. It is a distinction I covet."

She shrugged her graceful shoulders, and turned away; and Lady Galbraith, who was crossing the room at the time, and observed the gesture, shook her head reprovingly.

"Why do you always treat Mr. Borlase so cavalierly? Has he been doing anything to offend you?" she asked, with the freedom of an old friend.

"He is always offending me," Cecile returned, petulantly. "His very presence offends, even while it fascinates me."

"My dear child! What do you mean?"

"I hardly know," answered the young girl, with a half-shamed laugh. "but Mr. Borlase always affects me very curiously. I like him and dislike him at the same moment, and if I believed in mesmerism, or psychic force, or anything of that sort, I should fancy he possessed some supernatural influence over me. Do you know"—she dropped her voice into a whisper—"I have an idea that his fate and mine are destined to cross each other? I don't know how, and I can give you no reason for the fancy—which I daresay you will think a very foolish one; but there it is all the same, and I can't get rid of it, however much I try."

Lady Galbraith looked at her wonderingly. This was the first time she had heard the spoilt young beauty speak in such a curious strain; and the conclusion she came to was that Cecile must have been reading novels of the mystic class, and they had, for the time being, turned her little brain.

Lady Galbraith herself did not read novels on principle. She was a society woman, and found quite enough to occupy her time in going out and receiving visitors—in trying on dresses, and settling with milliners as to the colours and shapes of her new bonnets. But she was a kindly woman, sweet-natured, and generous for all her frivolity, and a devoted mother to her two children, Blanche and Rupert.

The Castle was about four miles from the nearest station, and as Captain Charlton drove there at about seven o'clock that same evening he had reason to feel grateful that the moon was up, for the road was especially lonely, and there was a good deal of up-and-down hill that might have proved dangerous to a less skilful driver.

The chestnut was determined to uphold her reputation for skittishness. First of all she absolutely refused to start, backed into the plantation, and behaved in a generally indecorous manner, ending up by bolting off at a mad gallop, as if quite determined to smash the cart and its occupants in one grand mêlée, but she had counted without her host.

Bertie Charlton had been the crack whip of his regiment, and his muscles were braced to the firmness of iron.

He let the mare have her head until they came to the bottom of a hill—simply contenting himself with guiding her—then he gave her a liberal taste of the whip, and forced her



to keep up her pace until they were half-way up the incline.

"There, my lady," he said, with a grim smile, as, blown and panting, she settled down into a steady trot, "I think I've conquered you."

And he had, for her behaviour during the rest of the journey was most exemplary, and taxed Charlton's powers so little that he was able to glance across the leafless hedges, on the surrounding country, which looked very bleak and cold beneath the still-white radiance of the moon.

"We shall soon have Christmas here, sir," observed the groom, as they passed a man and a drove of turkeys—the latter driven down from Wales, to be sold on the way—and Charlton acquiesced with a nod, while, strangely enough, his thoughts slipped back to a certain Christmas Day, three years ago, when he had been on a visit to a married sister in a country rectory, and had been laid up with a sprained ankle, which had kept him a prisoner to the house.

But it was not of his sister he was thinking, or the sprained ankle. A sweet girl's face, young, riant, and blooming, came back to his mental vision, bringing with it remembrances that he thought had died a natural death two years ago.

And yet they had power to call a tender smile to his lips, and to soften his eyes into an expression that was half pathetic.

"Poor little Aline—poor child—for she was but a child!" he said to himself. "I wonder where she is, and if she has forgotten? But of course she has. She was so young—she did not even know what love meant, but she had a nature as sweet as her face. I wonder what makes me think of her to-night! I have not thought of her for years—not since—"

He did not conclude the sentence even mentally, but the softness all faded from his eyes, and his lips set themselves in a stern line.

Evidently the end of the retrospection was far from pleasant, and it was rather a relief to find himself at the station, where half-a-dozen vehicles—farmers' carts, drays, and other similar conveyances—were awaiting the arrival of the train.

An unusual bustle pervaded the little platform.

The porters had woken up under the stress of the Christmas parcels that were already beginning to arrive; the station-master walked about with a great sense of his own importance at this festive season—even the lamps, with their flickering oil wicks, seemed a little less dull than usual.

"Good heavens!" muttered Charlton, suddenly coming to a full stop. "What a fool I am! I actually never inquired the girl's name, so goodness only knows how I shall spot her."

He had not to wait long before the train came in, snorting and puffing like some huge black monster, and sending forth a vaporous rush of cloudy steam, as with many groans it drew up in front of the platform.

As it happened, it bore a goodly load of passengers, for it was market-day at the county town; and this fact, added to the near approach of Christmas, accounted for the unwonted number of people who alighted.

Charlton watched them all, his quick eyes glancing over them, without, however, finding the person of which they were in search.

He had fully made up his mind what the new governess would be like. Tall, slim—not to say angular—and limp, with weak blue eyes, sandy hair, and, probably, freckles.

How he got the idea he could hardly have told, except that the last governess little Lady Blanche had had answered to this description; but there it was, and it was quite clear that no such person was in the train.

He waited until the engine shrieked, and puffed away on its onward journey, and by this time all the passengers were thronging towards the gate, where stood the porter collecting the tickets.

Charlton was about following them, when, under the shadow of a tree at the further end

of the station, he became aware of a small, slight figure, much muffled up in furs, and this, he decided, must be the governess.

He accordingly went up to her, and as he came nearer took off his hat, which until now had been pressed low down over his brows; and as he did so the moonlight fell full upon him, showing the keen, clear-cut features, the honest, if rather reckless, grey eyes, and the close-cropped chestnut curls, swept away in crisp waves from the square brow.

A little startled exclamation broke the stillness, the small fur-muffled figure came swiftly forward. Two gloved hands were held out, and a sweet piquant face, with lovely star-like eyes, gazed up into his.

"Oh, Bertie—Bertie! You have not forgotten your promise? You said you would see me to-day, though you had to cross oceans to come to me, and you have kept your word!"

Literally sobbing with excitement, she laid her head on his breast; and thus, for the space of a few seconds they stood silent—she trembling from head to foot with the delight of a great and unexpected joy, and he absolutely petrified with astonishment and remorse.

"Aline!" he murmured, more to himself than to her. "Yes, it is Aline."

## CHAPTER II.

He it was who recovered himself first. Man of this world enough to know what remarks would be likely to follow if they were observed, he drew her still farther into the shadow of the trees, gently loosening her clasp from his arms.

Then he looked at her earnestly, and saw that the years that had passed since they met had added a new charm to her beauty, a new radiance to the lovely eyes, a more rounded perfection to the curves of her delicate, spirited features.

"What brings you here?" he asked, in puzzled wonderment. "Are you alone?"

"Yes," she replied, half laughing and half crying. "I crossed the Channel last night, and came down from London by myself. I am going to Galbraith Castle as governess to Lady Galbraith's little daughter."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true; why should it not be?" opening her eyes in child-like questioning.

"Why, I am staying at Galbraith Castle myself, and I came here this evening to take the new governess back with me. The coincidence is too ridiculous."

A strange change came over her face. All the happy light died from her eyes, and she drew back as if a sudden shadow had fallen between them.

"You came here to meet the new governess!" she repeated, slowly. "Then, it was not for the sake of seeing me, and keeping your promise?"

Charlton bit his lip before he replied.

"How was it possible I could know you would be here? As for the promise—" He paused, for he could hardly tell her the truth, namely, that it had gone clean out of his mind.

"And you did not remember that this was my birthday—that I am nineteen to-day?" The scarlet lips were quivering now, and tears were perilously near the lovely eyes.

Charlton turned away, and mentally anathematised himself as a brute. That month in the country rectory, when she had been his nurse, had talked to him, played to him, read to him, had been so much to her, so little to him!

Verily,—

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,

"This woman's whole existence!"

"You see," he said, in excuse, "so many things have happened since then. I have knocked about the world, and seen so much—and done so little!—that you can hardly expect my memory to be as good as yours. But I have never forgotten you—of that you may be quite sure."

She smiled at him through her tears, and Charlton felt most devoutly grateful to the

station-master, who, after eyeing them with some suspicion and more curiosity, now came up and demanded the young lady's ticket.

Aline gave it, and then followed Charlton in silence to the dog-cart, into which he assisted her, while the groom went to look after the luggage. It was not until Bertie himself had got up, and taking the reins, sent the mare off at a trot, that they had time to speak to each other again; and then he, anxious to break a silence that threatened to become awkward, said:—

"Isn't it lucky for us that the groom behind is deaf? We can say what we like without fear of its being repeated. I want to hear all about you—what you have been doing, and everything else. When I saw you last you were on the point of being sent to a French convent, you know?"

"Yes," she said, slowly. "I have been there three years—in fact I only left yesterday. Have you heard that my aunt is dead?"

"No. My sister—who was the only person likely to give me news of you—went to India with her husband, two years since."

"Yes; I know she was gone. Well, poor Aunt Euphemia died six months ago, and, as you are aware, both my parents are dead—in fact, I have no relatives that I know of, and for money I have just forty pounds a year, so the Mother Superior of the convent advised me to get a situation as governess, and through her influence Lady Galbraith engaged me. There! I have told you my history. Now, tell me yours."

He observed that though she spoke with the familiarity of friendship, her tone was not quite the same as it had been when she saw him first. A shadow of constraint had fallen upon it, and upon her manner as well—a fear that she had betrayed her own feelings, without gaining the response she expected; but even yet the old dream was not quite dispelled—the dream which for three long years, sleeping and waking, had been ever present. How often she had recalled the tender words he had spoken during that visit of hers to his sister—the loving looks he had given her, and the implied assurances that he cared for her!

It is true he had never, in so many words, expressed his love, but he had told her to look forward to the time when she left the convent, and had promised that nothing should prevent his greeting her when her nineteenth birthday came round. Then, he said, he should tell her his secret—and what the secret was her heart had often whispered to her.

"Oh," he said, restlessly, in answer to her question, "I suppose much the same has happened to me as happens to other men. I have found out the truth of the saying that you cannot eat your cake and have it. I have got into debt, and done those things that I ought not to have done, and left undone those things that I ought to have done; in point of fact, my career has been conventional in the extreme, and I cannot claim for it even an iota of originality."

Aline laughed softly.

"Is that all?" she asked.

He hesitated again, pulled nervously at his moustache, and gave one hurried glance at the darkly radiant face, looking out of its fur wraps, by his side.

"Not quite," he answered, in a low voice. "There is something else I ought to tell you."

"And that is—"

"That I am married."

For a few minutes Aline sat very silent—but those minutes were fraught with sufficient agony for a lifetime. If she could have trusted, her voice she would have murmured some words of congratulation in order that he might not suspect the true reason of her silence; but, alas! words would not come, and she could only control herself sufficiently to remain staring straight before her at the frosty, moonlit landscape, which seemed to her as cold and desolate as her own life.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Aline?"

Bertie asked at last, finding the silence undurable.

She moistened her parched lips with her tongue before she answered, and her voice had a curiously far-away sort of sound.

"Yes. I hope—I hope, with all my heart, you are happy."

"Happy!" he repeated, with a half-groan. Then he laughed harshly. "Oh, yes; I am happy enough—as happy as nine men out of ten, I daresay, and that is something, is it not?"

"And your wife," went on Aline, who, now that the first step had been taken, found it easier to continue. "Is she at the Castle, too?"

"Yes. She is a sort of cousin of Lady Galbraith's. She was a Miss Borlase—an heiress. I don't suppose you have ever heard her name."

"No," with a melancholy little smile. "English news very rarely came to the convent, and I was secluded as rigorously as if I had actually been a nun. Is she beautiful—your wife?"

"She was supposed to be good-looking," he answered, indifferently; "but she is not very strong—or, rather, she has an idea she is not. If she had been well enough, we should both have gone to a ball to-night with Lady Galbraith and the rest, and then I should not have met you."

"Is there a large party staying at the Castle, then?" asked Aline, hastily, as if with a desire of turning the conversation from herself.

"About ten people, I think, or thereabouts."

"Who are they?"

"Well, first of all ourselves, and my wife's cousin, Sydney Borlase; then Lady Cecile Craven, the belle of last season; a certain Mr. Procter, a barrister; a Mr. and Mrs. Delamere, who are Americans, and a couple of 'odd men.' What do you think of the list?"

"It sounds alarming, but," with the same half pathetic smile, "I don't suppose it will affect me much, as I am not likely to see any of these grand folks."

"You will see me sometimes, I hope," he said; but Aline did not answer, for she had quite made up her mind that she would see just as little of him as possible.

This resolution, however, she kept to herself, and the rest of the journey was performed in silence that remained unbroken until a turn in the road showed them the Castle—a stately old pile, silvered over with the moonlight. Then Aline gave vent to a little cry of admiration.

"How lovely! I had no idea it was such a splendid old place!"

"It is rather pretty, certainly."

"It is something more than that—it is one of those stately homes which no country but England can show!" she exclaimed, with enthusiasm, as he helped her to alight; and soon afterwards she wished him "good-night," for Lady Galbraith's maid met her at the door, and escorted her through long, dreary passages to an octagon-shaped room in the tower. Here a dainty meal was spread out, and presently a second servant appeared with tea and coffee.

"My lady told me to say she hoped you would make yourself at home, Miss Somers, and ask for anything you want," said the lady's maid. "She will see you herself early to-morrow morning."

And then she took her departure, leaving Aline to her solitary meal. Eagerly enough she poured herself out a cup of coffee and drank it, but the sight of food was distasteful to her, and she turned her back on the table, and sat looking absently into the fire, her slim, white hands clasped over her knees, her eyes heavy with unshed tears.

It seemed to her that the events of a lifetime had been compressed in these last few hours—the short time that had intervened since she left the convent, and even yet she could hardly realise what had actually happened.

After a while, however, her preceptions grew clearer, and she told herself with a sort

of pathetic bitterness that she, not Charlton, was to blame for the mistake that had exercised so great an influence on her life, for she had put an interpretation on his friendship of which he had never dreamed. She had fancied he loved, while he only liked her.

Poor Aline! The warm blood surged up in a crimson wave of shame to her cheeks, and then pride and duty came to her aid. She would conquer this love of hers—stamp it out as completely as if it had never been. She would never forget that Bertie was married, and that even to think of him would be as wrong to his wife; and surely, with Heaven's aid, she would be strong enough to tear from her heart the last remnant of passion, and by-and-by hold out her hand to him with a sister's calm affection!

She knelt down for a few minutes, seeking comfort in prayer; then, with a new sense of strength, arose and went into her bedroom, which joined the sitting-room, and was similarly hung with tapestry, and equally oddly shaped.

A fire had been lighted on the hearth, but it had burnt down to a few embers; and the room—owing, no doubt, to the stone walls—struck strangely chill as Aline entered.

By this time it was nearly eleven o'clock, and silence had fallen on the Castle—for, of course, Lady Galbraith and her guests had not yet returned from Holthorpe, and only one or two servants were sitting up for them.

It did not take Aline long to undress and get into bed; and, in spite of the conflicting emotions at war within her, she soon yielded to actual physical fatigue, and fell asleep—a restless, disturbed slumber, full of dreams and feverish fancies.

She awoke suddenly, with a breathless sense of some terrible fear—supernatural fear—upon her. Great beads of perspiration stood on her brow, and her horror was all the greater because it was nameless.

In some unaccountable way she was conscious of another presence in the room, although, just at first, she could see nothing save the heavy oak furniture, just visible in the misty moonlight, and the moth-eaten tapestry on the walls, where warriors on white horses were battling with each other in sanguinary conflict.

An intense silence reigned, and there flashed across Aline the remembrance that she was far away from the rest of the house.

The lady's-maid had told her so, and added that Lady Galbraith's reason for putting her in the Tower was the fact of all the other rooms being occupied by guests.

After Christmas it was the Countess's intention to give her different apartments, and, as she had said this, a curious smile had come over the servant's face, as though she could have told the governess a good deal more if she had chosen to do so.

All this Aline remembered as she sat up in bed, peering through the ghostly moonlight, which lay white and chill in a long line of misty radiance that slanted through the narrow window across the room.

Surely something moved beyond that white glory—something dark and shapeless—that gradually detached itself from the shadows and took the resemblance of a woman's form!

Yes. Clad in long, neutral tinted robes, that were hardly distinguishable from the surrounding atmosphere, and with some sort of veil thrown over her hair, and half concealing her face. She stood motionless, then, with a slow movement, that can be described by no other word than gliding, she came forward, and stood in the full sheen of the moonlight, slowly lifting up one hand, until it pointed full at Aline.

Aline was no coward, but there was something so unearthly, so utterly weird in this nocturnal visitant, that all her previous theories concerning the impossibility of apparitions at once deserted her, and she felt no shadow of doubt that she was in the presence of a creature from another world.

She dared not speak—she dared not move—

she could only sit upright in bed, staring with distended eyeballs at that shadowy figure in the moonlight, while an unuttered appeal went up from the depths of her heart.

How long this lasted she could not tell. To her it seemed hours, but, in effect, it could only have been a few minutes then the tension grew too strong, and her overwrought nerves gave way.

With a shriek of terror that echoed through the vast old passages of the Castle, she sank back on her pillows, closing her eyes in a very abandonment of fear, that was as unreasoning as it was powerful; and then, strangely enough, the sound of her own voice gave her courage, and with desperate endeavour she reached out her hand to the matches that stood on a table by the bedside, and struck one, by which she lighted a candle. Then she looked round.

The room was empty!

### CHAPTER III.

Breakfast at Galbraith Castle was a very movable feast indeed. The Countess made no pretence of appearing until twelve o'clock; but such of the guests as felt inclined came down before that time, and had their meal served them by the butler, a grey-headed functionary who, by virtue of fifty years' service, had grown to regard himself as one of the family, and greatly impressed the more youthful visitors by his condescending dignity and affable manners.

On the morning after the ball it was not to be expected that the ladies would be down early; and, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Charlton was the only one to appear.

She was a dark, sallow-complexioned woman, with well-cut features—marred, however, by an expression of hauteur and ill-temper that had become habitual to them.

She was some years older than her husband, with whom she was passionately in love, and of whom she was equally jealous, the consequence being that poor Bertie was constantly suspected and accused of misdemeanours of which he was entirely innocent.

To do him justice he had, since his marriage, settled down, and done his best to make a good husband.

It is true he was not in love with his wife, but she had known that perfectly well when she married him; and it is probable that if she had gone the right way to work, she might have won from him a very sincere, if not passionate, affection. But this she did not do. Instead, she watched his every movement, suspected his most innocent action, and contrived by these means to make his life a burden to him.

It was only when she fancied herself ill—for she was a confirmed hypochondriac—and shut herself up in her room, that he had an hour's liberty; and then, as he once comically observed, he was on parole.

Altogether, Bertie was of opinion that marriage with an heiress was not an unmitigated blessing; but it had been his only alternative, when ruin stared him in the face, and debts of honour crowded upon him, which, if left unpaid, would have stamped him with indelible disgrace.

Miss Borlase had let it be plainly seen that she cared for him; and when she heard of his difficulties she sent to request his presence at an interview, which was restricted to their two selves.

What passed at that interview no one ever knew, but Charlton came out of the room an engaged man, and a month later he and Adelina Borlase were married.

On this particular morning she was more peevish and fretful than usual—perhaps because her husband was particularly silent and self-absorbed.

"I wish you would give me some of that game-pie, Bertie," she remarked, in an aggrieved voice. "Really, you are very rude, never paying the slightest attention to my wants, and not caring whether I have any breakfast or not!"



"I beg your pardon!" he returned, absently, as he got up and carved the game-pie, watched as intently by his wife as by her cousin, Sydney Borlase.

"Bertie is distraught this morning," observed the latter lightly. "His interview with the new governess last night evidently made a deep impression on him."

Charlton grew very red beneath his tan, and Borlase saw that the random shot had told. He pursued his advantage.

"Was she very pretty, Bertie? and very sweet? and very confiding? You were in luck's way, old fellow!"

"What are you talking about?" Mrs. Charlton demanded, impatiently. "I have heard nothing about this governess! Pray what has she to do with Bertie?"

"Only that he asked to be permitted to drive her from the station last night. Perhaps he thought the matter too trivial to be mentioned."

Mrs. Charlton turned angrily to her husband.

"How is it you did not tell me where you had been?"

"Oh, I don't know!" he answered, with an affectation of carelessness. "I did not think it would interest you. I suppose— Besides, when I came upstairs last night you were in your room, and your maid said you were asleep, so I did not disturb you."

"Considerate husband!" laughed Sydney, while Mrs. Charlton set her brows together in an ominous frown.

Something in Bertie's face warned her not to pursue the subject any farther just now, but she was none the less determined to sift the matter to the bottom as soon as they were tête-à-tête together, and there was no chance of an interruption.

Charlton made all haste to change the conversation, and turned to Ronald Galbraith, who was sitting at the bottom of the table.

"How did you enjoy the ball last night, Galbraith? I was awfully surprised at your going."

"Were you?" responded the young man, blushing, and looking slightly embarrassed. "So were the others, I think. It's ten years since I was at a dance—or thereabouts."

"I suppose Lady Cecile was the magnet that drew you?" jocosely observed Mr. Delamere, who was in the habit of making awkward remarks, and Galbraith vouchsafed no reply.

Borlase, however, shot a keen glance at him from beneath his dark lashes, and it was noticeable that he was silent during the rest of the meal.

When it was over he strolled into the smoking-room, where he was shortly afterwards joined by Mr. Proctor—the grey-haired, keen-eyed old barrister whose name Charlton had mentioned to Aline the preceding night.

"Ah!" exclaimed Borlase, "you are just the person I wished to see! I am in want of legal advice, and I may as well obtain it in a friendly manner, which means without paying, as in a professional manner, which means a fee."

"Fire away, my dear boy," answered the barrister, placidly lighting a cigar. "I am at your service."

"Well, then, enlighten my ignorance on the law of property. I am writing a novel, and the plot turns on a will made by the wife. What I want to know is, suppose a wife, possessed of property, died without making a will, would her money go to her husband?"

"Her money would, but her estates—if she had any—would not; that is to say, supposing she had no children."

"To whom would they go, then?"

"Her heir-at-law, brother, or cousin, or other relation, as the case might be."

"Thanks," Borlase returned, thoughtfully; and then, as if, having obtained this information from the lawyer, he had no further desire for his society, he retired to the window recess, where he sat in a deep reverie, that ended in his drawing two or three letters from his pocket, and reading them attentively.

"It's no good," he muttered at last, with a curse. "Those Jews won't wait any longer, and what is to become of me Heaven only knows! I wonder if Adeline would lend me five hundred? She might, easily enough, if she were not such a screw, but I'm afraid to ask her. However, there's no alternative, I suppose."

He got up, and stood for a moment in the deep shadow of the rich velvet curtains, looking out on the terrace, which was powdered over with a thin coating of snow. Suddenly his expression changed, growing even darker than it had been before.

Across the terrace came two people—Lady Cecile Craven, in a stylish green velvet walking-dress, trimmed with fur, and by her side, carrying two pairs of skates swinging on his arm, was Ronald Galbraith.

She was talking and laughing brightly up into his face, and even at this distance Borlase could see the smile that lighted the young man's dark features as he gazed down into her eyes.

The watcher gnashed his teeth. As much as he could care for any woman, he cared for Cecile Craven; and it was gall and wormwood to him to see her perceiving the company of another man.

He turned round from the window with a muttered oath. His prospects at the present moment certainly seemed dark enough—creditors dunning him for money on the one side, and the girl whom he fancied he loved, openly encouraging someone else, on the other.

As he left the smoking-room he encountered Lady Galbraith, who had breakfasted in her own room, and now made her first appearance in public.

"I am going to see my new governess!" she observed, after greeting him. "I have not made her acquaintance as yet."

"May not I come too?" asked Borlase, struck by a sudden remembrance.

The Countess looked surprised, but gave the required permission; and the two then went towards the schoolroom, where Aline and her pupils—twins of eight years of age—were already making friends with each other.

The bright, frosty sunlight came full in through the curious oriel window, and fell in a sort of halo round the young girl's figure, and both the Countess and her companion were struck by her beauty. Seen in this clear morning light, she looked even younger than her years; and there was something indescribably winning in the sweet, delicate flower-tinted face, with its sensitive mouth, and deep-fringed, dark eyes. Her hair, which was of a dark chestnut colour, full of beautiful lights and shadows, was swept back from her forehead (where it broke into a hundred tiny rippling curls), and coiled in heavy masses at the top of her small head, which seemed actually weighed down by its abundance.

She rose as Lady Galbraith entered, and made a little half curtsy, but the Countess—won at once by the radiant, childish loveliness—held out her hand.

"How do you do, my dear? I see you have already been introduced to your pupils. I hope you won't find them too trying?"

"I don't think so, my lady," Aline looked at the two little faces with smiling confidence, "I fancy we shall be able to get on well together."

"That is right. You have lost no time in making friends, I see"—for both children were clinging round the young girl's skirts. "By-the-way, I trust you are rested from your journey?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, my lady."

"And you had a good night's sleep?"

Aline's face grew pale, and she moved uneasily, as if the very simple question disturbed her.

"No—I had bad dreams," she answered, in a low voice. "I was very tired when I went to bed—perhaps that was the reason."

"You had rather a long drive from the station," put in Borlase, speaking for the first time. "As your driver is a sort of connection

of mine, I may be permitted to hope that he did not frighten you by indulging in any of the freaks which he sometimes practices in order to show off his skill as a whp?"

Lady Galbraith frowned slightly at a speech whose bad taste was obvious, and Aline looked into the young man's face with a certain grave directness that he found rather embarrassing.

"I do not think it is in Captain Charlton's nature to do such a thing as that," she answered, quietly. "He is much too considerate of other people."

He had not been very considerate of her, poor child! But this she did not think of in her eagerness to defend him.

"It has not taken you long to form an estimate of his character," observed Borlase, with a sneer, which he could not repress. "Your opportunities for studying him must have been limited to a couple of hours at most!"

Aline coloured a little, and hesitated. Finally her natural truthfulness triumphed over her disinclination to speak of Bertie.

"Last night was not the first time I have met Captain Charlton," she said, addressing herself to Lady Galbraith, and ignoring Borlase with a completeness that that gentleman deeply resented. "I was visiting at his sister's house when he was there—a long time ago."

"Indeed!" observed the Countess, kindly. "Then I am very glad he happened to meet you. It made you feel less strange coming to a new place. And now we will leave you to your pupils, and you must remember that I don't wish them to commence lessons until after Christmas."

When they quitted the schoolroom the Countess went her way, and Borlase proceeded to his cousin's apartments, where he found Charlton and his wife in the midst of a discussion that was evidently of a stormy nature.

Bertie was standing with his hand on the back of a chair, and it was clear from his face that he was exercising great self-control in preventing himself from making very bitter answers to her reproaches.

Borlase pretended not to notice the cloudiness of the horizon, but seating himself near Adeline, turned to the officer with a knowing smile.

"I've just been to see the governess, Bertie. I admire your taste. She is certainly very pretty indeed. Sly dog! You did not tell me yesterday that she was an old friend of yours!"

Charlton frowned, and made no reply. It did not seem worth while declaring that when he stated he was quite unaware of Miss Somers' identity, especially as Sydney Borlase was the last man in the world with whom he would have chosen to discuss her. Mrs. Charlton, however, had no idea of letting her husband off so easily.

"An old friend of yours, Bertie! Who is she? What is she?" Then, with vindictive spite, as he paused before answering, "Perhaps I am wrong to ask. The history of your acquaintance very probably won't bear repetition."

"That is a speech that you have no business to make, Adeline," said Charlton, sternly. "Miss Somers' good name is as free from reproach as your own, and ought to have equal consideration. She is a friend of my sister's, if you wish to know."

"But a friend whom you have never mentioned to me."

"I do not know that you have ever encouraged me to make confidences to you. Perhaps, if you had, our married life might have been different," retorted Bertie, stung into retaliation by the bitterness of her tone.

Mrs. Charlton burst into a passion of tears. She was one of those inconsequent women, of whom one can never prophesy what their next move will be.

"You see how he treats me!" she cried, appealing to Borlase, who was sitting silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground. "He knows I have no brother or father to take my part,

and so he thinks he can abuse me how he likes."

"Abuse you!" repeated Charlton, in amazement.

"Yes; abuse me. Do you think I am fool enough not to see through your insinuations? Do you think that every day does not make clearer to me the fact that you married me for my money, and that is all you care for?"

"For Heaven's sake, be silent!" cried Bertie. "If you want to wash dirty linen, the least you can do is to wash it in private."

"I wish Sydney to know of your conduct. He is my cousin, and nearest relative, and it is only right he should hear how things really are."

"Then you shall not tell him in my presence," declared Charlton, as he snatched up his hat and left the room, heedless of his wife's reproaches.

After the door had closed behind him, Sydney drew nearer to Adeline, and took her hand in both of his.

"Poor little cousin!" he said, softly. "How I wish I could make you happier than you are."

Thus encouraged, Mrs. Charlton poured a long list of her husband's delinquencies into Sydney's very willing ears; and although her grievances were nearly all of her own manufacture, it is needless to say that they received deep sympathy from him, as his object now was to ingratiate himself with her.

"One good thing is that your money is entirely under your own control," he observed, as she paused; and then, after a few minutes, he tentatively preferred his request for the loan of five hundred pounds. Just for a few months, he said, until he could settle his affairs; but Mrs. Charlton was proof against any such persuasions, and at once refused to advance the money. Indeed, she professed some indignation at Sydney's presumption in asking her; and he went away, cursing her miserliness and his own folly for supposing he would gain anything from thus humiliating himself.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"I am going," said Lady Galbraith, "to give a masked ball the night after Christmas Day. I hope no one objects?"

"Objects, dear Lady Galbraith!" exclaimed Lady Cecile, clasping her pretty white hands together. "Why, it will be simply delightful, and we shall all owe you a debt of deepest gratitude for thinking of such a charming idea."

The Countess and her guests were having tea in the grand old oak-raftered hall. Candles had not yet been lighted (of course, there was no such thing as gas at Galbraith Castle), but the great logs on the hearth threw out ruddy gleams—quite sufficient illumination to talk by—and the hall looked singularly picturesque, with its Japanese screens, its tall palms in brass pots, its low wicker tables, and luxurious velvet armchairs.

Aline Somers presided at the tea-table, and poured out the tea—rather shyly, but with the quiet grace that was peculiar to her; and many were the admiring glances cast at the beautiful governess, in her simple black dress, with its narrow band of white frilling at throat and wrists.

The two children, Rupert and Blanche, had gone out to spend the day, and it had struck the Countess that the young governess would be very dull all alone in her apartment, so she had sent for her to join them, alleging as an excuse that she herself was too lazy to pour out the tea.

Aline had hesitated a little in accepting the invitation, and had gone down, trembling at the idea of meeting Bertie, whom she had not seen since the night of her arrival.

Directly he observed her he came up and spoke to her—followed by the jealous glances of his wife, who received an unpleasant shock as she saw how lovely the governess was.

With Lady Cecile Craven Aline had already

made acquaintance, for the former admired her with the sincere admiration of one pretty woman for another, and she was too impulsive and warm-hearted to let the difference in rank interfere with her friendship.

"I suppose," observed the Countess, "we shall have to arrange about our dresses, and send to London for them. By-the-way, Ronald," turning to her brother-in-law, who was, as usual, by Lady Cecile's side, "are there not a lot of old Court dresses somewhere up in the Tower?"

"Yes," he answered, uneasily, "I believe there are."

"Could we not go and see them?"

"What—go into the Tower!" exclaimed Lady Cecile, briskly. "I thought it was haunted?"

"So it is supposed to be," returned the Countess, with an awkward laugh, and an apprehensive glance towards Aline. "Of course, it is all nonsense."

"Nonsense or not, I don't believe you yourself would venture there after dark," returned Ronald.

"Perhaps not; but then I know I am exceptionally weak and superstitious. I shouldn't mind in the daytime, as I have proved by my suggestion."

"I think," said Ronald, gravely, "that perhaps you had better not go. If you want the dresses I will turn them out of the chest, and send them down to you. That is much the best way."

"Why," exclaimed Lady Cecile, opening her blue eyes very wide in surprise, "I do believe you yourself are frightened!"

He coloured a little without replying, and the Countess broke in, hastily—

"How absurd of you, Ronald! You will frighten Miss Somers, whose rooms are in the lower part of the Tower, if you talk so ridiculously."

"Are your rooms there?" he asked, eagerly of the governess. "I did not know it."

"Well, you see," said the Countess, in excuse, "all the other rooms were full, so I was bound to put Miss Somers there. I shall change her apartments after Christmas."

Aline had listened in silence to this discussion, wondering whether, after all, the figure she had seen on the night of her arrival had been some supernatural visitant, instead of the phantom of an excited imagination, as she had since tried to persuade herself.

She felt a chill fear of the coming night, and mentally determined not to go to bed without lighting a couple of candles, and seeing that her door was securely fastened—though what protection bolts and bars would be against spirits she did not pause to consider!

"Well, and how do you like your new home?" said a voice at her side, lowered so as to be audible only to herself, and, ignoring his wife's black looks, Bertie Charlton seated himself in a low chair close to the governess.

Aline tried hard to control herself; but, in spite of all her efforts, her heart would beat thick and fast, and the red blood would flow through her veins at double its usual rate, with the mere consciousness of his presence.

"I like it very much," she responded, after a slight pause. "Everyone is very kind to me."

"But surely you are lonely sometimes!"

"A little—occasionally, not often."

"Poor little girl!" he murmured, unconsciously, and his deep, grey eyes rested on hers with an expression of tenderest sympathy in their depths, beneath which her own gaze drooped.

"Bertie, I want you!" cried the sharp accents of Mrs. Charlton, and he had no alternative but to obey the call, and leave Aline for his wife's side, where she kept him a prisoner until the dressing bell sent everyone upstairs.

"Claribel," said Ronald Galbraith, laying a detaining hand on the Countess's arm as she was about following her guests, "I want to speak to you seriously. Pray say no more about going into the Tower, and for Heaven's

sake change Miss Somers's sleeping apartments!"

The Countess had one peculiarity. She hated to be interfered with. Kind-hearted and sweet-tempered so long as her will was law, she became obstinate directly anyone attempted to throw obstacles in her way, and as she listened to her brother-in-law's remonstrances, her delicate brows met together in a very decided frown.

"My dear Ronald," she said coldly, "you will kindly remember that I am mistress in this house, and that if I desire to make any arrangement you have no right to attempt to stop me."

"I know that," he returned, with a sigh, "but it is for your own good I speak. Believe me, I have a good reason for my request."

"And what may that reason be?"

"That I cannot explain; but surely you can trust me without an explanation!"

Lady Galbraith toyed with her bracelet, turning it round so as to watch the gleams of firelight playing on the diamonds, and striking out starry scintillations of many-coloured lights.

"Ronald," she said, at length, very slowly, "for some years I have known there was something strange connected with the Tower—some secret that you have been at pains to keep from me. At first I was much worried at the idea, but gradually I have grown accustomed to it, and have almost ceased to think of it. It was my late husband's express stipulation that you yourself should have apartments in the Tower for your life; but his will did not say that I might not make use of the lower rooms, which you do not occupy; and in this instance, I have been simply compelled to do so for lack of space. Strange sights and sounds have been seen and heard in the Tower," she continued, fixing a penetrating glance upon him, "and they have been attributed to supernatural agency; but whether the explanation is a true one or not you know best. I, personally, should be sorry to accuse you of a secret that carries disgrace with it."

Saying which, she made him a slight inclination of the head, and swept away, leaving him standing quite still, his head bent, his eyes fixed on the ground, his whole attitude full of intense despondency. A minute later and a soft white hand was laid on his arm—a pair of lovely eyes peered up into his.

"Mr. Galbraith," said a young, sweet voice, "are you in trouble? You look—oh, so sad!"

It was Lady Cecile, who had come down in search of a book she had left, and whose impulsive nature had induced her to speak to him.

The fair face was so gentle and sympathetic—the low voice so full of tender entreaty—that Ronald would have been more than man if he could have resisted its unconscious pleading. He caught the white hand in his, and raised it to his lips, and then—neither of them could have afterwards told how it happened; but, somehow, his arms were round her, and his cheek pressed to hers, and he was murmuring all sorts of loving words—telling her how he had grown to love her in spite of himself, and that his only hope of happiness was the hope of winning her!

And Cecile. Well, she forgot all her little coqueries in face of this heartfelt devotion. She forgot that she was a beauty and an heiress, who might have aspired to a countess's coronet, or even the strawberry leaves of a duchess. She forgot everything except the fact that she loved him with all her heart; and with a sigh of utter content she let him draw her to his breast, and imprint on her lips the first lover's kiss that had ever pressed them.

Perhaps neither would have been so perfectly happy if they had been aware of the baneful light of two angry eyes watching them. The owner of these eyes was none other than Sydney Borlase, who had been an unseen spectator both of the Countess's interview with Ronald, and of the Lady Cecile's as well. As we have said before, the hall was



unlighted save for the ruddy glow of the fire, and Borlase happened to be sitting in the shadow of a draped screen as the Countess's guests trooped off to dress for dinner. As he was on the point of following, Ronald Galbraith's words stopped him, and he cautiously withdrew behind the screen itself, where there was no possible chance of his being observed, and where he was enabled to see and hear all that passed without danger of detection.

Needless to say his espionage had a result far from pleasing; and when he saw Cecile in Ronald's arms his hands clenched themselves together with such fierce determination as to suggest that if he had chanced to hold a dagger at that precise moment he would have been very much inclined to use it. However, with a view to his own safety, he slipped quietly out of the hall, where he knew the lamps would soon be lighted, and went upstairs, revolving dim schemes of evil by which the two lovers might be effectually separated.

That same night, after the ladies had gone to bed, and all the men (save Ronald Galbraith, who had also retired) were in the smoking-room, Borlase made his way to the Tower, which he had never before visited. Passing the rooms on the lowest floor, which he knew were occupied by the governess, he paused in front of the door on the next floor, and after listening cautiously tried to open it. But it resisted all his efforts, and he came to the conclusion that it must be locked on the inside; so, without wasting any more time, he ascended the next flight of steps—which like the rest of the Tower were of stone, worn hollow in the middle from many centuries of traffic.

The walls, both outside and inside, were of enormous thickness, as could be seen from the loopholes, through which pale gleams of wintry moonlight made their way; and the sinister thought struck Borlase that if one wanted to commit a murder it would be impossible to find a better place for its perpetration, seeing that no cries could possibly penetrate those massive walls, which had doubtless been witnesses of many deeds of terror in years gone by.

Up here it was especially dark, and it was only by dint of groping that Borlase at length found the door—a door of heavy oak, studded at intervals by thick iron nails. Against this he pushed as he had done against the others, but, unlike them, it yielded, and he found himself in a tiny chamber whose outlines were hardly visible in the obscurity. His eyes, however, had by this time grown accustomed to the darkness, and he was enabled to see, just opposite, a second door, which seemed to have been added recently, for it was lined with green baize.

He had no time to examine it—indeed, he had no time to think of anything save escaping from detection, for at that moment the door was pushed open, and the light from within enabled Borlase to recognise the figure of Ronald Galbraith in the aperture. At the same instant came the sound of a voice from within which struck Borlase as familiar, although he could not remember where he had heard it before.

"Ronald!"

The young man turned back at once, and Borlase, who had been wondering what possible excuse he could invent for his presence, took the opportunity to slip noiselessly out of the antechamber and downstairs, when, instead of entering the smoking-room as was his custom, he put on a cap and ulster, and strolled out on the terrace, at the farther end of which a view of the Tower was attainable.

On the second story lights were visible, but the third was in utter darkness. Borlase, however, had not finished his investigations, for after looking round to make sure that he was unobserved, he made his way to the north side, and there his curiosity was repaid, for at the top of the Tower a window of stained glass seemed to have been inserted, and through this the soft glow of light, coloured by the medium

through which it passed, made a patch of warmth on the cold, steely atmosphere.

"Hulloa! What are you up to? I beg your pardon, sir! I thought it was one of them tramps prowling about after whatever they could get."

It was one of the gardeners who spoke, and his sudden appearance was accounted for by the fact that he had just come out of one of the greenhouses, where he had been to attend to the fires. Borlase was about passing him, with a careless "good-night," when, struck by a sudden idea, he came to a pause.

"What is the meaning of that light up there—the one at the top of the Tower?" he asked.

"That is Mr. Ronald's laboratory, the place where he has a furnace and studies chemistry," returned the gardener, proud of his knowledge. "His sleeping rooms are on the floor below."

"And is he the only occupant of the Tower?"

"Well, he were until the new governess come, but my lady have given her the lowest rooms. If," he added, slyly, "there was anyone else in the Tower, it was spirits, and people do say there are plenty of them about. I'll wish you good-night, sir."

And as if fearful of being further questioned, he departed, while Borlase stood looking meditatively up at the outlines of the Tower, which seemed darker and grimmer than ever in this weird light.

When at length he went indoors, it was with a cruel smile on the handsome lips, and a mocking light in those dark eyes, whose evil glitter was dreaded by friends and enemies alike.

#### CHAPTER V.

With the advent of Christmas week all the ladies of the Castle busied themselves for a couple of hours a day in decorating the little, it was soon discovered that her fingers were brought into active requisition in assisting, for it was soon discovered that her fingers were the nimblest, and her taste was the most to be relied upon, while it seemed quite impossible to tire her, however much work she might have to do.

Mrs. Charlton rather piqued herself on her own good taste, so she was at the church a good deal, and her husband, as in duty bound, accompanied her.

Thus it happened that he saw much more of Aline than either had bargained for, and it was with a curious compound of pleasure and pain that they found themselves thrust into each other's society.

As a matter of fact, Aline avoided Bertie as much as she could, and he, on his part, made no efforts to seek her out; but it was quite impossible, under the circumstances, for them not to be brought into frequent contact, even against their own wills.

"What a lovely picture Miss Somers makes!" said Lady Cecile one morning—she and Ronald were indefatigable in their exertions, and came to the church regularly every day. "Do look at her! Mrs. Charlton. Would not Sargent love to paint her?"

Aline was half way up a ladder, holding a long wreath of evergreens, amongst whose glossy foliage red berries made a vivid crimson glow.

Her hat was off, and those lovely little rings of silken hair rippled round her brow, while her dark eyes—rendered yet darker by their luxuriant curly lashes—glowed like twin stars. Bertie drew a quick breath, and turned away as he looked at her.

"I don't see anything so very beautiful in her," returned Mrs. Charlton, crossly. "She is too small and too dark for my taste. Besides, she is pale."

Adeline, herself, had rather a high colour occasionally, but it was rumoured it owed its origin rather to rouge than to nature.

"Too pale!" repeated Lady Cecile, reproachfully. "How can you say so? It is the most lovely, ivory pallor, and a thousand times

prettier than common-place roses. What do you say, Captain Charlton?"

"I agree with you, Lady Cecile," said Bertie, with incautious frankness.

His wife laughed rather harshly, and shot a by no means amiable glance in his direction.

"Bertie has such strange taste. He always admires the people that I don't," she observed, and Lady Cecile, as she turned away, remarked sotto voce:

"That's because you are too jealous to admire anybody!"

Her engagement with Ronald Galbraith was now made public, and everyone had offered their congratulations except Sydney Borlase—who had gone up to town for two or three days on particular business.

What was the nature of that business he did not state, but he had declared his intention of being back at the Castle in time for Christmas Day.

During the next few days the greatest excitement prevailed with regard to the masked ball that was to be given on the night after Christmas.

Boxes and parcels were arriving from London by every train, and no efforts were spared to make the affair a brilliant success.

It was pretty to see Lady Cecile during those few days.

She was gentler, sweeter, more subdued than she had been before her engagement, and her very beauty seemed to have taken an added charm under the magic spell of love.

"I am so very, very happy," she said, earnestly, to Ronald on Christmas Eve, as they stood in the embrasure of the hall window, the rich drapery of purple plush curtains falling around them, and screening them from view. "I sometimes fear it is a dream, and I shall wake up to find it vanished."

"It is no dream, love," he replied, tenderly, drawing her slender figure closer to him. "It is simply an enjoyment of Heaven's greatest gift to mankind. I, too, am happier than I ever dared hope to be."

"And you are not dissatisfied with me?"

"Dissatisfied, darling!" in surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Well," she returned, with a new and sweet humility, "I know I am rather vain, and frivolous. I do think a great deal of my appearance, and I do spend a good deal of money on my frocks—while you are so clever, and learned, and you study so much."

"Who says I study so much?" he asked, with a smile, as she paused.

"Ah, I know you do. Even the servants have told my maid about your rooms in the Tower, and the chemical retort you have there, and all the experiments in chemistry that you make. Oh, Ronald, I should so like to see your laboratory!"

She clasped her hands, and looked up at him as she spoke. There was just sufficient of the wintry afternoon light to see that his face grew very pale—almost alarmed.

"Should you, my darling?" he returned, after a perceptible pause. "So you shall—some day."

"But why not at once, Ronald? Could we not go there this afternoon? There will be time before tea."

He shook his head.

"Quite impossible, dear. I shall have to make preparations for your visit, before you come."

"But that is not at all necessary, Ronald. I should much prefer seeing the study just as it is when you sit there yourself. Cannot you manage it?" with the prettiest little air of coaxing possible.

"Not this afternoon. I have to see the steward Hewett at four o'clock—and—" looking at his watch—"it is that time now."

Lady Cecile pouted. She was not accustomed to having her requests refused, and she thought it rather unkind of Ronald. She was, in fact, inclined to be a little angry with him, especially as he—apparently wishing to put an end to the discussion—almost imme-

diately left her to keep his appointment with Hewett.

"I wonder why he doesn't want me to go up there?" she said to herself, coming out of the recess into the firelit hall—which was now converted into a very bower of greenery with Christmas decorations. "It is strange, but certainly, for some reason or other, he was put out at my asking him."

She was not quite in her usual spirits during the rest of the evening, and the faintest shadow of constraint seemed to have fallen between her and her lover.

He glanced at her rather wistfully once or twice, and the old grave look that she had managed to banish came back to his face, but he made no attempt to come to any explanation, and Lady Cecile went to bed, wondering if, in their love, had come

"The little rift within the lute

"That by-and-bye will make its music mute."

The next morning was Christmas Day, and as Cecile's maid drew up her blind a scene of wonderful loveliness broke on the view.

During most of the night snow had fallen, and now the earth lay clothed in a spotless garment of dazzling purity to greet the anniversary of her child—God's birth.

Cecile no sooner beheld the snow-laden branches of the cedar that grew outside her room than she sprang out of bed, put on dressing-gown and slippers, and then stood in front of the window, looking out in speechless admiration at the changed landscape.

Every branch, every twig bore its sparkling burden of crystallized whiteness, while the panes of glass were frosted over with delicate tracery, lovely enough to have been executed by fairy fingers. Over all shone a clear, cloudless expanse of blue sky, and from afar came the soft, sweet chimings of the Christmas bells, ringing out their heavenly message—"Peace on earth, goodwill towards man!"

There was something so impressive in this scene that tears involuntarily rushed to Cecile's eyes, and all the faint clouds of doubt and suspicion of the night before faded like mist before sunshine.

She hurriedly dressed herself and went downstairs, looking radiant in a green cloth, tailor-made dress, with silver buttons and silver clasps; at her throat she had pinned a tiny branch of mistletoe—a daring challenge to her lover when he met her!

But Ronald was not in the breakfast-room when she got down—indeed, it had but one occupant, a man who was standing in front of the window, and who turned round sharply as she came in.

It was Sydney Borlase.

"The very happiest of Christmases to you, Lady Cecile!" he exclaimed, coming forward, and extending his hand, while she, very disappointed, and a little confused, returned his greeting more coldly.

"I had no idea you were at the Castle!" she observed, standing before the fire and holding out her delicate hands to the blaze. "When did you return?"

"By the first train this morning. I was determined to be here for Christmas Day. Has anything happened during my absence?" "Nothing, except"—her cheeks grew rosy, and her eyes dropped—"my engagement with Mr. Galbraith has been made public."

"Indeed!"

There was a slight pause, during which he looked at her so fixedly that she became confused.

"You do not attempt to congratulate me, Mr. Borlase," she said, presently, with an effort at playfulness.

"No," he replied, gravely. "If I told you I wished you happiness I should be a hypocrite, for I am quite certain that as Mr. Galbraith's wife"—he hesitated over the word—"there is very little chance of your attaining it."

Cecile drew up her slim young throat with a movement full of hauteur as she turned and faced him.

"Mr. Borlase! Do you know what you are saying?"

"I know quite well, Lady Cecile. My words are grave, but not too grave for the situation. Believe me," he added, very earnestly, "that my interest in your welfare is far too deep for me to wilfully trifle with you. Whatever hopes I might one time have cherished on my own account have all yielded to friendship, pure and simple, and it is as your friend that I warn you against Ronald Galbraith."

"Hush!" she exclaimed, imperiously. "I will not hear a word respecting him. He is all that is noble and good, and you ought to be ashamed for trying to prejudice me against him!"

Borlase looked at her with that strange, subduing gaze of his, and Cecile began to tremble. Again that eerie feeling came to her that this man possessed some magnetic power over her destiny.

"You shall listen to me," he said, with quiet insistence. "What I have to tell is for your good, and after you have heard it you can act as you like. For a long time I have had suspicions of Ronald Galbraith, but until now I never took the trouble to investigate them, because it was really of very little consequence to me whether they were true or not. When, however, I saw that you were likely to become affianced to him, I determined to make inquiries, and I have done so, with the result that I declare he has no right to ask you or any other woman to be his wife. He has a wife already!"

Cecile repeated the words after him, as if she did not comprehend their meaning; then she laughed aloud, with scornful incredulity:

"Ronald married! Nonsense! You do not know what you are saying!"

"Yes, I know perfectly well what I am saying," he answered, deliberately, "and I will prove the truth of my words. Look at this!"

He drew from his pocket-book a printed form, and held it for her to see. It was an official copy of a certificate of marriage between Ronald Marmaduke Galbraith and Margaretta Visconti, and the date it bore was that of twelve years ago. Of its genuineness there could be no doubt.

"I got it at Somerset House," went on Borlase, in the same slow, convincing tones, "and if you like to send stamps to the amount of three shillings and sevenpence, the officials there will supply you with a copy. Doubtless you wonder how I discovered this? I will tell you. When I left the Castle a few days ago, I went to town and sought out a man whom I had known years ago as valet to Mr. Ronald Galbraith, and he gave me all the information I wanted—but under the seal of secrecy, and that seal I put upon you now. He told me that twelve years ago Mr. Galbraith was secretly married to an Italian woman, much below him in station, but that shortly after the marriage she developed symptoms of insanity, which obliged him to confine her. She had, however, intervals of reason, and he was afraid to put her in a madhouse lest in those intervals she should betray the secret of their connection, so he brought her here and immured her in the Tower!"

Borlase paused in order to watch the effect of these extraordinary disclosures on his hearer. After looking at the certificate, Lady Cecile had resumed her old place in front of the fire, where she now stood, holding her hand before her face so as to hide its deadly pallor. That she was deeply agitated there could be no doubt, but she was brave enough to let no sign of her emotion escape her. Whatever doubts of her lover's integrity were beginning to assail her, she did her best to keep them to herself.

"It sounds sensational enough, does it not?" went on Borlase, with a bitter sneer, finding she did not speak. "If one saw such a thing in a novel one would be inclined to call it far-fetched; but, believe me, Lady Cecile, many things happen in real life that are much too sensational to be put in novels—

and you have not far to seek for Mr. Galbraith's motive in bringing his wife to the Castle. At his brother's death he was left guardian of the present Earl, and it was expressly stated in the late Earl's will that he should be permitted to occupy the Tower until his guardianship were over. Now, the Tower had acquired an evil reputation for being haunted, the walls were thick enough to prevent cries being heard, and Mr. Galbraith's supposed chemical studies enabled him to go in and out without arousing suspicion. Also he had the Castle virtually to himself, for the Countess took a dislike to it when her husband died, and this is the first time she has visited it since, so you see Ronald Galbraith ran little risk of detection."

Again Borlase paused, but the statuesque figure near the mantelpiece never moved, although the little hand held before the face trembled.

"Lady Cecile," he continued, "no doubt you are mentally calling me hard names for thus unmasking your lover's hypocrisy, but by-and-bye you will do me the justice to believe that all I have done has been actuated by the most sincere interest in your happiness. You are too dear to me for it to be otherwise. All I have told you is true, and, in order to prove it, you have only to ask Ronald Galbraith who is the woman that is kept locked up in the Tower!"

As he concluded he took Cecile's left hand, which was hanging listlessly at her side, and pressed it to his lips, and then, without another word, he left the room.

Five minutes later Galbraith himself entered, holding in his hand a small morocco case that had just come down from London, and that contained a diamond pendant, which he intended giving as a Christmas present to his betrothed.

His face lighted up as he saw her standing with her back towards him, for it was yet early, and he had hardly expected to find her down. Then something in her attitude struck him as strange, and as he came nearer and saw her face he started back in amazement.

"Cecile!" he cried, "are you ill?"

And indeed she looked ill. Every vestige of colour had left her cheeks—even her lips were white, and the pretty blue eyes looked cold and hard in the morning light.

"Stay!" she said, motioning him backwards, as he would have caressed her. "I have a question to ask you, and on its answer depends our future relationship to each other."

He said nothing—as a matter of fact, he was too paralysed by her tone and manner to find words.

Could this be the loving, tender Cecile who had nestled in his arms yesterday afternoon—this cold, disdainful creature, with her marvellous white beauty and scornful eyes? He could hardly believe the evidence of his senses, and there was keen reproach in his face as he looked at her.

It may be she felt it was not undeserved, for her lips quivered pitifully.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a sob in her voice. "Perhaps I have misjudged you—perhaps I have been deceived, and you are, after all, the Ronald I love—noble, true, and generous! I will not believe anything but your own confession—if you tell me you are innocent I will believe it, though all the rest of the world may declare you guilty! Ronald," she came swiftly to his side and took his hand while she looked into his face with eager, miserable eyes, "answer me truly. Is there a woman in the Tower—a woman whose name was Margaretta Visconti, but whose name now is Margaretta Galbraith?"

At the question he grew pale as she herself was; his eyes fell, he drew back, and the hand she had taken dropped heavily from her grasp.

Surely the answer written on his face was—guilt!

"It is true!" Cecile murmured, in a low,



tense whisper. "I see it in your eyes; you make no attempt to deny it."

"I cannot deny it," he returned, sorrowfully. "But, oh, Cecile, it is not as you think! My darling, will you not trust me? Do you not love me sufficiently to believe in me, in spite of circumstances, that are, I confess, terribly against me?"

The agony on his face was equalled by the agony in his voice, but to her it sounded like remorse—not innocence.

How, indeed, could he be innocent, while he allowed Borlase's accusation to pass uncontradicted?

"How is it possible that I can trust you?" she cried out, clasping her hands against her heart, which was beating so violently that it seemed as if it must burst all restraint. "There is no room left for doubt. If explanation is possible, why do you not give it?"

"Because I cannot—because I am withheld from doing so. How you became possessed of your knowledge I do not actually know, but I can guess—and I say with the man in the parable, 'An enemy hath done this!'"

"Friend or enemy, it matters little," she responded, steadying her voice by a great effort, and drawing off her betrothed ring as she spoke. "It would be impossible for me to marry a man whom I could not implicitly trust, and so our engagement is at an end!"

She tendered him the ring, and, finding he did not take it, laid it down on the table, which was sparkling with delicate china and shining silver; then, without another word, she slowly left the room, while he stood where she had left him, gazing after her, mute and immovable.

It seemed to him that the agony of a lifetime was condensed in those few minutes, while he realised that he had, indeed, lost her for ever.

Truly, for at least two people in the Castle, there was little hope of a happy Christmas!

#### CHAPTER VI.

When Aline opened her window on Christmas morning to feed the robins she had already tamed, she found a bunch of fresh-gathered violets lying on the snowy ledge, and a label pinned to them, wishing her the season's greetings.

Who had sent them she guessed readily enough, and she was young enough to feel a thrill of delight at this evidence of Bertie's thoughtfulness.

It was pleasant to feel that there was at least one person in the Castle who had thought of her on this Christmas Day.

Contrary to her expectations she was not permitted to remain in solitary loneliness, for Lady Galbraith insisted that she should have her meals with herself and her guests; and so, for a few hours, the young governess was permitted a glimpse of that brilliant world of fashion of which she had hitherto only dreamed.

The Countess was much exercised in mind with regard to Lady Cecile Craven, who sent down word by her maid that she had a nervous headache, and would be obliged to remain in her room. In consequence, Lady Galbraith went up to console with her, and returned rather put out, for the invalid had positively refused to see anyone.

Under these circumstances, no one was surprised at Ronald Galbraith's haggard face, and later on in the day he begged to be excused, and withdrew to his room in the Tower, from which he did not reappear until the next morning.

His absence was not much noticed, for everyone was thinking of the ball to-morrow night; and after dinner, when they were all assembled in the big drawing-room, round a real yule-tide fire of immense logs, Lady Galbraith turned to Aline, saying, laughingly—

"You must come, too, Miss Somers! I am sure you will enjoy it, and the more the merrier."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Aline, involuntarily. But the Countess would take no denial; and

when it came to a question of dress she said, conclusively—

"As to that, I will find a suitable costume for you; and if nothing else is procurable, you can at least have a domino and a mask!"

Mrs. Charlton was the only person who seemed to see anything strange in the Countess's invitation. She had been much aggrieved by the presence of the governess at dinner, and had expressed her anger to Bertie in very strong terms.

"So absurd!" she exclaimed, taking care, however, that the Countess did not overhear her. "I never heard of such a thing as allowing a paid dependant to sit down as an equal with us. I don't know what my lady is thinking about!"

"Miss Somers is a lady, you must remember," Bertie returned. "Her father was a clergyman, and her family is as good as the Countess's own."

"Ah, of course you will take her part! No doubt it was at your suggestion that Lady Galbraith invited her!" sneered his wife; and the officer was wise enough to make no retort. Contradiction would only have made matters worse.

Mrs. Charlton was destined to be yet further annoyed by the governess, for, in the evening, Aline was asked to sing, and at once took her place at the piano with a simple willingness that formed a pleasant contrast to Adeline's own airs and graces whenever she was asked for some music.

Moreover, in spite of the latter's many masters and careful training, there could not be a doubt that Aline sang infinitely better. Her voice was wonderfully rich and sympathetic, and she was as much at home in a brilliant operatic aria as in a simple Scotch ballad.

Altogether, Mrs. Charlton was forced to acknowledge that the governess's debut was most successful, and, as may be imagined, her feelings towards the young girl were not more cordial in consequence.

The next morning, greatly to Lady Galbraith's chagrin, Lady Cecile announced her intention of going home, and, on her hostess expressing surprise at this sudden departure, she told her briefly that her engagement with Ronald was at an end.

Surprised as the Countess was, she was far too well-bred to ask the reason of the breaking off of the engagement, and Cecile vouchsafed no further explanation.

She was too sick at heart to care what people said or thought of her, and her one idea now was to go home, where she would be able to brood in peace over her lost happiness.

Accordingly she left the Castle, Ronald watching her departure from the Tower. If she could have seen his face—anguished, full of love, as it was—she would surely have turned back even then!

But fate beckoned her forward—that immutable fate which there is no resisting, no appealing!

Aline was conscious of a certain amount of excitement as she shook open the dress Lady Galbraith had sent her, and prepared to attire herself in it ready for the masked ball.

It was the costume of an Italian peasant girl—a full, short blue skirt, a black velvet bodice, laced over a white under vest, and a bright-coloured head-dress, which was particularly becoming to her dark, delicate beauty.

Indeed, Aline gazed at herself with very pardonable admiration, as she contemplated the charming figure given back by the looking-glass, and thought it was almost a pity to spoil it all by putting on the ugly, black silk mask!

However, it had to be done, for Lady Galbraith had insisted that no one should come without a mask, and when Aline entered the ballroom she was very glad to have her face hidden, otherwise she would surely have felt shy in that splendid throng, for most of the guests were already assembled.

What a scene it was! The ballroom was, of course, decorated with trailing wreaths of

holly and ivy, laurel and mistletoe, and great plants had been brought in from the conservatory, as well as quantities of cut flowers, which scented the air with their perfume. And then, the maskers themselves! It seemed to Aline as if they represented every character in history or fiction, of whom she had ever heard or read!

There was Mary Queen of Scots chatting gaily with Ivanhoe; a Catherine of Russia, in imperial robes, holding amiable converse with a Troubadour; kings and peasants, queens and harlequins, red-cross knights and columbines, all mixed up together in brilliant and picturesque confusion.

"What do you think of this motley gathering?" said a voice behind that she recognised; and, turning round, she saw Captain Charlton in a dress of a Spanish Toreador, but wearing a mask that entirely concealed his features.

"It is charming!" she returned, enthusiastically. "I never saw anything like it before, and I feel quite happy in watching it."

"Do you?" he said, rather sadly. "You are easily content."

"Yes, for to-night, at any rate. Do you know"—she dropped her voice to a whisper—"I feel strangely joyful this evening; I can't tell why, and I don't want to know why. It is that sort of happiness which I think the Scotch call 'fey,' and it means that something very bad indeed is going to follow."

"I hope not!" he exclaimed, and just then Lady Galbraith came up, magnificently attired as Madame le Pompadour.

She was the only exception to the general rule of wearing a mask, but she said that her duties as hostess would be better performed without one.

"Come, come!" she said, gaily. "Peasant maidens have no business to idle away their time with Toreadors! Come, Sir Knight—to a crusader who was passing at the time—will you not be chivalrous enough to ask this pretty maiden to trip a measure with you?"

The knight needed no further invitation, and Aline was seized round the waist, and whisked away to the strains of one of Strauss's waltzes—compelled to listen to many fawning compliments, and whispered vows, which, as she was masked, only provoked her laughter.

Lady Galbraith seemed to have taken her under her especial protection, and was quite determined that her evening should be pleasant, and Aline found herself entering fully into the spirit of the thing, and—she was very young, remember!—casting away all thoughts of care, while she enjoyed the sweetness of the passing moment!

Later on in the evening the Toreador came up to her again.

"Can you not spare me one dance?" he asked, and she immediately assented, without, indeed, giving herself a moment's time for reflection.

The band was playing "Myosotis," and the sweet valse strains rose and fell on the perfumed air, softly and plaintively, as sighs breathed in a very ecstasy of enjoyment.

Bertie Charlton was an exceptionally good dancer, and his companion was light and graceful as a sylph.

Their steps suited each other to perfection, and as they floated round to the entrancing strains of the music, it seemed to Aline as if she had never known any enjoyment as exquisite in all her nineteen years of life.

"If it could only go on for ever!" she breathed, involuntarily, and he mentally echoed the wish, though he dared not utter it aloud, as she in her innocence had done.

They did not stop until the last bars of the valse were finished, then he took her into the hall (where refreshments were served), and got her a glass of iced water.

"Let us sit down for a little while," he said, rather unsteadily; "there is a seat in the window recess over there, and we shall be out of this throng of people."

They were not only out of the throng of people, but virtually alone, for the heavy drapery fell across the recess, and shut them off from observation.

"Oh!" Aline exclaimed, "I must take off this mask! I am so hot from dancing."

As she did so the moonlight fell full upon her face—flushed to a lovely carmine—and upon her dark eyes, which were brilliant as two stars with excitement. She looked wonderfully beautiful—so beautiful that Bertie felt his pulses beginning to throb with passionate admiration, and his heart beating as no woman had ever made it beat before.

A flower dropped from her corsage, and he stooped to pick it up. As he did so their hands touched, and the contact, momentary as it was, sent sharp little throbs of pleasure stinging through the young man's veins, while the crimson in Aline's cheeks grew even deeper than before, and she made a half movement as if she would rise.

"Don't go!" he exclaimed, and his voice was hoarse with excitement, while, as he spoke, he laid his hand with gentle firmness on her round, white arm.

Then a sudden madness fell upon him, and he lost control over himself, as he realised the truth to which he had hitherto wilfully blinded himself. He loved her! Not as a friend, not as a sister, but as a man loves the one woman whom Destiny has decreed shall be his fate.

He forgot Adeline, forgot honour, forgot even what was due to the innocence of the girl at his side; and, drawing her to him, he pressed upon her lips a passionate kiss that was in itself a revelation. "My darling! my darling!"

In a moment she had torn herself away, and stood before him, pale with anger and indignation.

"How dared you insult me so! How dared you—how dared you?" she cried out, with vehement wrath, then, not deigning him another look, she swept aside the curtains, swiftly crossed the hall, and went through the passage to her own room in the Tower, where she paced backwards and forwards in a perfect fever of excitement and anger.

Presently it cooled, and she sat down before the table, and leaning her head on her folded arms burst into a passion of sobs—sobs so violent that they seemed actually to rend her delicate frame.

Brought up in strict seclusion, and far away from all possible lovers, she was as innocent in deed and thought as it was possible for a girl to be; and that kiss of Bertie's had called into life a host of unknown feelings whose power she only dimly comprehended.

As a matter of fact, she was angry with herself for not being more angry with him, but her modesty had received a blow; and, more than that, she was deeply grieved and disappointed that he should have subjected her to this indignity.

He who had been her ideal of all that was good and noble—whom she had worshipped in the innermost shrine of her heart as the man out of all the world worthiest of admiration? The disillusion was terrible.

As for Bertie, he was beside himself with disgust for his own behaviour, which he mentally characterised as disgraceful.

Directly she had gone he awoke to a full consciousness of the enormity of his offence, and he would have given his right hand to recall that last half-hour.

True, he had yielded to an impulse stronger than himself, but there was no excuse to be made for him, and the same measure of scorn he would have meted out to another man who had similarly acted he meted out to himself.

He remained for some time in the window recess, thinking over the position; then, feeling too utterly heartick to return to the gaieties of the ball-room, he went upstairs to his own dressing-room.

As he entered he caught sight of himself in a long glass, in the silks and velvet of his Toreador costume, and with an angry exclamation proceeded to divest himself of the

gay garments, and put on ordinary evening dress.

It seemed such a farce, careering about in those ridiculous clothes, like an actor on the stage, when he was sick to death of everything—sick of the light, and colour and brilliance of the society life he was bound to lead, and which, like Dead Sea Fruit, turned to dust and ashes between his teeth.

Even here he could hear the strains of the dance music from below, but they were softened and subdued by distance, and sounded strangely mournful and sweet. Bertie, however, could think of but one thing—Aline, and the look of outraged indignation she had turned upon him as she left him. The fact of this love for her he took as a matter of course. It was, indeed, so deep-rooted and so essentially a portion of his being that he knew nothing could make it less, although a sense of duty might keep it hidden in his heart until death claimed him as its own. One thing was certain—he must go away, so as to be out of the reach of temptation, and no time must be lost in leaving the Castle.

But how to persuade Adeline of the necessity of their departure—for, of course, she must go with him? He pondered for some time, then decided that when his letters came in the morning he would say they had brought him a summons from his solicitor, who wished to see him on important business.

The excuse was a weak one, but it was the best he could think of, and would doubtless achieve its purpose; for after they had left the Castle he could tell his wife that he was tired of being in the country, and could take her a run over to Paris, where the sight of the shops and the boulevards would soon distract her attention, and console her for leaving Lady Galbraith's circle.

If this plan were carried out he would have no opportunity for seeing Aline, and imploring her pardon for his offence. And yet—he could not leave without expressing penitence—could not go away and let her think that he had wilfully insulted her, after professing a friendship whose sanctity he had been the first to invade!

No, he must let her know his contrition, and the only way of doing this seemed to be by means of a letter. Acting on a sudden impulse, he took up a sheet of note-paper, and wrote on it these words,—

"I hardly dare ask your pardon, and yet, for the sake of the past, I am emboldened to do it. Will you forgive me, and believe how sincerely penitent I am—more penitent, indeed, than words can express."

"BERTIE CHARLTON."

He put it into an envelope, directed it to her, and decided not to entrust it to a servant, but to push it underneath her door himself. Then it struck him that if Lady Galbraith chanced to see him without his masquerade attire, she would reproach him for absenting himself from the ballroom at so early an hour.

A happy idea occurred to him. With his Toreador costume had been sent a large black domino, so that if he wanted to thoroughly disguise his identity, he might do so by donning it over the other. This he put on, and then slipping his mask over his face, and adding a large black felt hat, he felt he could defy detection—even that of his wife.

On his way downstairs and through the hall he met no one, for the cotillon was being danced, and even the servants had slipped away to see the unusual spectacle. He crossed the hall, and traversed for the first time the long stone passage that led to the Tower—and which shut it off so completely from the rest of the house; and when he came to the door, which he knew must give access to Aline's rooms, he came to a pause, for it was ajar, and from within the sound of a deep, anguished sob fell on his ear.

"Aline!" he exclaimed, but there was no answer. "Aline!" but still she did not hear him, and still those heartbroken sobs continued.

Bertie waited for a minute or two, knowing full well that he was the cause of her sorrow; then he could bear it no longer, but pushed the door open and entered the room.

*The second and concluding part of this exciting story of love and mystery will appear next week.*

#### A DOMESTIC HAPPENING

"George, dear," said Mrs. Newlywed the other evening just as they were about to leave the house for the theatre, "I've left my fan up on the dressing-table in my room and I can't go without it. Won't you run up and get it—that's a dear." George goes up three steps at a time. A moment later his voice comes down awfully sharp for a man who has been married but six months. "It isn't on the table," he says. "Why, yes, it must be, dear. Look in the upper drawer in that long, blue box in the left-hand corner. Don't disarrange things. It is there." "No, it isn't." "Well, don't get cross about it. Maybe I left it on the bed. Is it there?" "No; I'll be—." "George! If you can't do a little favour for your wife without swearing about it, you needn't do it at all. Look in the second drawer of the dressing-table in that pink box. Is it there?" "No, it isn't, and I knew it wasn't before I looked!" "You didn't know anything of the sort. Do find it somewhere. We're late now. Maybe it's on the mantelpiece. I know I laid it down while I adjusted my hat. Is it on the mantelpiece?" "No, it is not. I'll just be eternally—." "George! If you swear again I'll take off my things and stay at home! If you'd look for the fan instead of prancing around and swearing like a trooper you'd find it. See if it is in my hat-box. Sometimes I drop it in there. Found it?" "Found it?" snarls George jeeringly. "Talk about a needle in a haystack! It's nothing compared to a—." "George Newlywed! Just as sure as you speak that way again I'll stay at home. Look on the chairs and the table and—what are you doing up there? Upsetting chairs and kicking over things, and growling like some wild animal. I'd be ashamed! I suppose I'll have to come and look for the fan myself, tired as I am. Can't you find it?" "Find nothing! A man might as well hunt for the North Pole, or a particular grain of sand in the bottom of the sea as to look for—." "There, there! Stop making quite such a pitiful spectacle of yourself. If I were a man, I'd be a man! Look in the wardrobe. Oh, here's the fan. I declare if it hasn't been lying here on the hall-rack all the time. I remember now that I laid it down when I—." "George Newlywed! I'd be serving you right if I didn't go a step with you. Swearing like that! Come on, wretch! I suppose you'll snarl and sulk all the evening." A prediction that was fully verified.

#### THE CHEERFUL FACE.

How many souls with grief distressed  
We meet along the way;  
How many hearts with wrong oppressed  
Pass by us through the day!  
Yet we may soothe the worst despair,  
If we the time embrace;  
And, with kind words, will also wear  
A bright and cheerful face!  
It is the mirror of the heart,  
Reflecting what is good;  
It has no hollowness of art,  
And no deceptive mood.  
Oh, what's so beautiful and sweet,  
And what so in its place,  
So winning, gladsome and complete,  
As woman's cheerful face?  
It has its charm in young and old,  
The gentle and the brave,  
And lives, in grateful stories told,  
When they are in the grave;  
For hearts that gladdened at their sight  
Still keep for them a place,  
And speak in tender, sweet delight  
Of each bright, cheerful face!



## Gleanings

**WHERE SHOTS STRIKE.**—Of every one hundred and ten shots which strike some soldier, forty-three will lodge in the legs, thirty-three will lodge in the arms, twenty-two strike between neck and waist, one in the neck, and eleven shots some part of the soldier's head.

**FAT MEN.**—It is remarkable how seldom one finds a fat man unmarried. It is the thin men as a rule who run to bachelorhood. It may be urged that matrimony is a weight increaser in men, but this is putting the cart before the horse. It is true, nevertheless, that where you find a fleshy man his tendency is to marry. In matters of colour the fair man may be said to have it as against the dark man, and if there be a dash of red in his composition matrimonial probabilities are thereby increased. The little man has, in this respect, as in some others, pre-eminence over the long man. Women, as a rule, are readier to marry tall men—they admire length—but long men are not always so ready to be married.

**A HOSPITABLE HEATHEN.**—It was high noon and Monday. Worse yet it was the thirteenth day of the month. A knock was heard at the kitchen door of the Burns mansion. The Chinese servant opened the door. A tramp of long and varied experience accosted him. "I've been travelling, and have played in mighty hard luck," observed the tramp. "I lost all my money in an attempt to corner oats, and now I'm hungry, very, very hungry. Can't you please give me a little bite of something to eat?" The Chinaman comprehended the situation at once. A benevolent, placid smile spread itself over his entire countenance. "You likee fish?" he asked of the tramp. "Yes, I like fish first rate. That will do as well as anything." "Come Friday," said the hospitable heathen.

**EARN THEIR PENNY.**—In the last year or two the youngsters of Stratford-on-Avon have taken up a quaint custom. The town is full of children playing in the streets in an apparently aimless manner, but as soon as an American tourist appears the boys gather around him and begin a recitation in chorus of wistful sing-song. They start in with a little valuable information about the life of Shakespeare, the dates of his birth and death are given, and a half dozen judiciously selected dramas are named as best representatives of his work. The performance closes with a rendition of the famous quatrain over the grave—"Cursed be he"—delivered in a tired voice. The mass play is perfect; not an infant gets out of time. When they have finished they continue standing in a ring, mute and pleading, and the appeal of their eyes will haunt the visitor unless he gives a penny right around the circle.

**DENTIST AS A DETECTIVE.**—If Paris is prolific in producing thieves, it also is most fruitful in expedients for catching them. Doctor Rousseau, a dentist living in the Rue des Martyres, has adopted a novel and amusing method. Doctor Rousseau and his wife were walking on the boulevard a few days ago when a young man snatched a handbag containing money and jewellery which madam was carrying. The dentist was unable to catch the thief, but had time to distinguish his features, though he never expected to see him again. By a curious coincidence, however, the thief came to the dentist's a day or two later to have his teeth attended to. Doctor Rousseau, concealing his astonishment, asked him to take a seat, as it would be necessary to make an impression of the jaw, and this he immediately proceeded to do. When the dentist considered that the plaster was sufficiently solid, he calmly explained to the helpless thief that he was at his mercy and had better follow him quietly to the police station. The man wildly gesticulated, but, finding that his wide-open mouth was imprisoned by a solid block of plaster of paris, he consented to go to prison.

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.**—Another new and useful contrivance is soon to be installed in the streets of Paris—an apparatus for rendering first aid to the injured. A model of the device was recently tested. According to reports which have been received from Paris, the contrivance resembles a lamp-post letter-box and contains a small medicine chest, folding stretcher, and is equipped with a telephone apparatus for communication with the nearest ambulance station. In order to obtain access to the box, a glass panel is broken, as in some fire alarm systems.

**THERE WAS A LIMIT.**—"I am glad they moved away," remarked the good housewife, speaking of a family of borrowing neighbours who had just left the neighbourhood. "I was willing to lend them a loaf of bread occasionally or half a dozen eggs or the washboard or the lemon squeezer, but when they got down to sending the little girl over to borrow pennies to give the organ grinder I began to think it was nearly time to draw the line; and, to cap the climax, one day they actually asked me to come over and take care of the baby while they went out to do the shopping!"

**PRETTY SERVING MAIDS.**—In the land of the mikado, the charming little serving maids call forth the encomiums of the masculine traveller. They impress one at first as being mostly made up of a smile, sash, and hairpins; their appearance is quaint and dainty, their movements full of grace, their voices soft and their manners delightful. They seem made for the toy tea houses, where they usher you in with many bows and suppressed giggles. You are seated on a cushion on the floor in an empty room—for furniture there is none, strictly speaking, in happy Japan except among the upper classes. Then tea is brought in on a little lacquer stand a few inches high, and placed by your side. But it does not reach you without a good deal of preliminary first, for the mouse who carries the stand, and the other one who helps, and the third who flanks the column, and the fourth one who skirmishes in the rear, all drop on their knees first at the door, and bow profoundly and rub their knees, just as we saw them do in the "Mikado." Then how they busy themselves with the tea and little cakes! One takes off the cosy, and another looks anxiously into the thin porcelain cup lest there be a speck of dust in it, and another offers you the tiny plate of cakes, and looks so sadly pathetic if you don't take any that you feel you would suffer the pangs of indigestion for much less.

**CHARACTER TOLD BY THE FACE.**—An open mouth is a sure sign of an empty head. An insignificant nose means an insignificant man. A projecting upper lip shows malignity and avarice. Pointed noses generally belong to meddlesome people. Large eyes in a small face betoken maliciousness. A retreating chin is always bad, it shows lack of resolution. A projecting under lip indicates ostentation, self-conceit, and folly. Fine hair generally betokens native good taste and intelligence. A dimple in the chin is pretty, but indicates weak mental organisation. High cheek bones always indicate great force of character in some direction. Fullness of the temples is supposed to show powers of mathematical calculation. A small mouth, with nose and nostrils also small, shows indecision and cowardice. Half-shut eyes show natural shrewdness, together with lack of sincerity. Slow moving eyes are always found in the heads of persons of prudence and ability. Grey is said to be the colour of talent and shrewdness. Great thinkers have grey eyes. In women they indicate a better head than heart. Grey eyes, however, are of many varieties. There are the sharp, the shrewish, the spiteful, the cold, the penetrating, the meditating, and the intellectual, but the fact remains that the grey represents the head. Round-eyed persons live much in the senses, but think less. Deep-set eyes receive impressions more accurately, definitely, and deeply. Narrow-eyed persons see less, but think more and feel more intensely.

**A GOOD SAMARITAN.**—The wasp is generally looked upon as an unmitigated nuisance, and it is not often that anybody can be found to say a good word for this insect which is so prone to be active in the stinging line. The following account seems to show the little fellow in a better light. At a summer hotel in the northern part of Pennsylvania one of the boarders became annoyed by the persistent buzzing of a wasp about his head and knocked it down with a newspaper. It fell through an open window upon the sill, apparently dead. Only apparently, for a few seconds later, to the observer's astonishment, a large wasp flew on to the window sill, and, after buzzing around the injured one a second or two, began to lick it all over. After this treatment (which may have been a kind of massage) the sick wasp seemed to revive, and his friend then dragged him gently to the edge, grasped him around the body, and flew away with him. Evidently the stranger, finding a wounded comrade, gave some aid partly to restore him preliminary to removal to a place of safety for further treatment, and then carried him there. This brave little wasp acted like the Good Samaritan, who found a man "half dead," "bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine," and "brought him to an inn and took care of him."

**ODDLY PAIRED.**—Matrimony is something like the triumph of the unexpected. Why do so many men choose wives as physically unlike themselves as possible? There are Captain and Mrs. Ross, who look absolutely ridiculous when walking together. There he is, over six feet in height, while she barely comes up to his watch pocket. A pocket Venus he calls her. Doctor and Mrs. Lloyd made an even more ludicrous picture. He must weigh over two hundred pounds, and is as broad as a house, while she would make an excellent study in anatomy—all bones and angles. But the case of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas is worse still. She ought to have been an Amazon, for she is as tall as a man and walks like one, too, taking strides a yard long; while he trots along on a level with her shoulder. Then there is Mrs. Downing, the most beautiful of women, who might have married almost anybody; yet she married the ugliest man out of a travelling show, with a wig—yes, he wears a wig, and a cork leg. Now all these couples might have been so much happier and better suited to each other if they had only paired differently. But there seems to be a fatality about it, and if a man has to be disciplined I dare say an unsuitable marriage is just as efficacious as anything else.

**THE REASON.**—Teachers who require written excuses for tardiness from parents of pupils sometimes receive very amusing notes. Here are a few specimens from a number received some time ago:—"Dear sir, please excuse James for lateness, I kneaded him after breakfast." A second note reads:—"Please forgive Billy for being tardy, I was mending his coat." The third excuse goes more into details, but is none the less interesting:—"Mister sir, my Jason had to be late to-day. It is his business to milk our cow. She kicked Jase in the back to-day when he wasn't looking or thinking of her actin'; so he thot his back was breke, but it aint. But it is black and blue, and the pane kept him late. We would git rid of that cow if we could. This is the fourth time she kicked Jase, but never kicked him late before. So excuse him for me." A girl absent for half a day brought the following satisfactory excuse:—"Miss teacher—my dotter's absents yesterday was unavoidable. Her shoes had to be half-souled, and she had a sore throte. Her konstutushun is delikit and if she is absent any more you can knew that it is en account of unavoidable sickness or something else." A boy absent for half a day laid the following explanation on his master's desk:—"Dear sir, please excuse Henry. He went to grandpapa's funeral with me this forenoon. I have been promising him for several weeks that he might, if he was good, and he has been very good, so I kept my word."

# A DESPERATE DEED

## SUMMARY OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

Harold, Earl of Silverdale, is spending the Christmas holidays at Woodville Honour. His host, Sir Stuart Woodville, has twin daughters, Lillian and Marguerite, who bear such a striking resemblance to each other that a stranger finds it extremely difficult to distinguish between them. Marguerite has already a dark page in her young life; while Lillian has given her maiden confidence and love to the Earl, and a marriage is speedily arranged. The Earl and Countess of Silverdale are returning from their honeymoon, and, while staying in London for a few days, a telegram reaches the Earl, stating that his daughter Iva, by his first wife, has been injured in a fire. The Earl at once leaves for Belgium. During his absence Lillian agrees with Marguerite to return quietly to their Sussex home. They are detained on the way owing to an accident. Lillian is mistaken a second time for Marguerite by the man who holds her sister's secret. This person had followed Lillian to her room at the hotel, and she, terrified at his threats, is powerless to say a word, when he fires, and she falls lifeless. Marguerite, finding the body a little later, takes in the situation at a glance, and determines that she, Marguerite Woodville, is dead, and that Lillian, Countess of Silverdale, still lives.

## CHAPTER VI.



### ARK!

Was that a knock?

No, just the wind beginning to rise—just the blowing of a leaf against the window-pane.

A queer scene. The gilded, tawdry hotel-room, with its cotton-plush furniture and bright-valanced bed; the narrow, black, wooden mantle on which a couple of candles flared; an illuminated patch—the corners were mystically dim.

And in that semi-circle of dull yellow light two women, one seated in a leathern arm-chair, her hands fallen stiffly down over the sides, her head lying heavily back, the face like a thing of stone, the sightless eyes half-open, the frozen lips apart; the other, like and yet so enormously unlike it, a slim little figure, standing just beyond, clad in a trim travelling costume, a scarf of black Spanish lace wound over her head.

Here was colour enough for you—her cheeks were scarlet as poppies. Here excitement—her eyes burned like flame. Her life—thrilling, intense, tumultuous; for she was one irrepresible quiver from head to foot.

Dead—Lillian was dead!

No, no, no! She must be sure never to say that. It was Marguerite who was dead; yes, Marguerite. Poor Marguerite! She had loved Lillian. But no, it was Marguerite she must be sorry for—for her must she grieve.

What should she do next? Ring, alarm the inmates? Not just yet. She must think. She must think a great deal.

Would anyone here notice anything strange? How could they? They had found it impossible to distinguish the sisters in broad daylight. Her hair was brown, to be sure. Who could tell it was black under the thick-meshed lace?

She would go back to London early in the morning, taking Lillian—no, Marguerite—with her. She must telegraph her father and the Earl. The Earl! he could not marry her in any case. The law of England prohibited marriage with the sister of a deceased wife.

What matter? She had grown reckless of late. She would make him as good, as loyal, as loving a wife as if they had been wedded in St. George's, Hanover Square. And he would never know the truth—never, and instead of being wretched as any branded galley-slave, instead of living in terror and starting guiltily at every sound, her life would flow on calm and fair and beautiful, far above all vulgar dread and still more vulgar need.

She was lovely; she knew that. And would not all be well with her when she was beloved, exalted, wealthy?

Ah! what was that? Did one of the little dead hands move?

There again—yes!

She shrieked aloud. She glanced at the face. It was senseless, staring, rigid as ever. But surely the hand had moved.

Another frantic shriek—another.

Steps came hurrying along the corridor without. The barking of a dog which ran out into the room mingled with her cries.

She saw now what had alarmed her. Waking up where he had lain under the chair of his mistress, little King Charlie had pushed his nose into the lifeless fingers, seeking his usual pat of recognition.

A knock. Her only answer was a scream. The door was flung open. They came hurrying in, the proprietor, his wife, half a dozen guests, as many servants.

"What is the matter?" they cried.

They were tumbling over each other in their eagerness.

But the incident of the spaniel had thoroughly unnerved the girl. She could only cry out, inarticulately, hysterically, wildly.

A moment more and they had seen it all for themselves—a woman fair, young, richly dressed, lying back in a great chair ghastly and stark.

"Good heaving!" the landlord cried, retreating. "She is dead!"

They huddled together, wordless, terrified.

The poor young lady! It did not look like a violent death. How had it happened? The landlord pushed his wife forward.

The sobbing cries grew fainter. She must not give way again like this, she told herself, savagely—there was too much to plan, to do.

"My lady," the good woman confronting her said, respectfully, "is it certainly death? Shall we get a doctor?"

Her heart gave one wild bound.

My lady! The deception she had begun to dread, what was it but child's play after all?

"Yes, yes. Call a doctor at once. I fear it is too late. I was lying on the lounge there asleep. I had left my sister sitting at the window, about to write to our father. When I awoke I called her. I lit the candle and drew the curtains before I looked at her. Then I saw—I saw," chokingly, "that she was dead."

She had turned toward the little group at the door as she offered her explanation. In the uncertain candle-light her woful, tear-wet face was very lovely. And, indeed, she was not feigning sorrow. She had loved her sister, as far as it was in her peculiar nature to love. And after her terrible quarter-hour of isolation, it was quite a relief to bewail her bereavement in sympathetic ears.

For they were sympathetic. Was not she young and beautiful, and in grief? More than all, was she not a real live Countess? A title is an immense recommendation to that class of people.

The poor creature! they whispered to each other. Such an awfully sudden death to befall her twin-sister. And in this little out-of-the-way place, too. No wonder she felt it dreadfully. They must do all in their power for her.

"Here is the doctor," someone said.

He came busting in, a short, rosy, preposterously stout individual, with a cast in his eye, an air of importance, and an umbrella.

"Ah, the Countess of Silverdale, I believe?"

He bowed as low as his stomach would permit. Her ladyship inclined her dark-draped head.

But he had already turned to the stiff figure in the chair, and, professionally alert, had begun an examination. The room had been cleared, only the landlord's wife remaining.

"Stay with me," Marguerite had pleaded, in a sudden accession of weakness.

And, feeling highly flattered and fluttered, the good soul acquiesced.

In a few moments the doctor looked up.

"Had not her heart been affected for some time?"

"So she told me less than a week ago."

"Ah! as I thought! You must detail me the circumstances of your discovery of her death."

She did so, lucidly, briefly. Excitement was on the ebb. She could feel the fire in her cheeks burning down.

"Do you know if she received a shock of any sort?"

She hesitated. Would she mention her suspicions? No, that would never do. Who could tell where might not the smallest hint lead? So she shook her head gravely.

"I think not."

Well, a shock is not necessary—not necessary, exactly," chirped in the little man, taking some papers from his pocket, "but death from this kind usually follows shock. May I have a pen and ink, Mrs. Simpson?"

"Certainly, sir, if her ladyship will excuse me."

Marguerite nodded.

Mrs. Simpson waddled away. She came back in a minute bearing the articles required.

The doctor placed a chair for Marguerite, then drew one for himself up to the round mahogany centre-table.

He paused, pen in hand.

"Her name?"

There was absolutely no hesitancy. Her voice was full and clear.

"Marguerite Woodville."

"Age?"

"Nineteen."

Then followed several other questions.

After writing for some minutes, he presented her the paper.

"Sign, if you please."

She took the pen, wrote in a dashing hand "Lillian Silverdale," and underneath, in explanatory conceit, the little doctor wrote, "Countess of Silverdale."

At last, with many bows and politely-worded condolences, he was gone—with a very fat fee in his purse, too.

"And now, if your ladyship will pardon the liberty I take, I think you ought to go to bed. You are looking all worn out, my lady."

"I am beginning to feel all worn out!" with a faint, sad smile.

Now that the reaction had set in, the supreme strain she had undergone was telling. A sudden thought struck her.

"Where is Jeanne—my maid? I have not seen her this evening."

The rosy-posy face of the landlady grew confused.

"She has friends living just outside town. She slipped off to visit them for an hour or two. She didn't think as how you'd require her. There she is now."

Then came up the passage a light-running step. A girl in a cashmere dress and brown hat knocked, and looked in.

Marguerite and the landlady were standing quite near the door. She did not see beyond them.

Marguerite roused herself for a last bit of acting. This was the one opportunity for which she had been longing.

"Why did you go out, Janet, without permission?"

The girl faltered—redder than she was with running she could not be.

"Please, your ladyship, I didn't mean to be gone over fifteen minutes. I didn't think during that time your ladyship would need me. I went to see my brother's cousin's wife, being as how I was so near to her."

Marguerite's face was dark and stern.

"That will do," she said, coldly. "I shall leave the amount due to you with Mrs. Simpson for you. I shall not require your services longer. You may continue to reside with your relative."





MRS. SIMPSON WRITES THE FATAL TELEGRAMS FOR THE COUNTESS.

"Oh, your ladyship!" the girl protested, beginning to cry. "You don't mean to send me away? That does not seem like you, my dear lady."

Marguerite turned wearily, and murmured a word or two to Mrs. Simpson, in consequence of which that energetic dame went to the door, pushed the girl away, saying:

"Go home, come to-morrow, Janet. I suppose you don't know the sister of your mistress is dead?"

Then she shut the door and fastened it. Marguerite was lying on the lounge.

"Please, come, your ladyship," she urged, deferentially, but firmly. "Please come. We must wash and care for your poor sister if you are bound to go to London in the morning. If you will write out your dispatches, Simpson will send them, and, as to the dear young lady there, we'll see to everything about her."

Marguerite rose obediently. There was not much life, energy, about her now. She was wan; and she shook as if with cold. Quietly Mrs. Simpson led her to a little sitting-room not far from the chamber of death, and wrote the following telegrams at the Countess's dictation:—

"Marguerite died here to-night. We go back to London in the morning. "LILIAN."

And to the Earl:—

"Marguerite died suddenly to-night. Don't hurry back. You could not arrive in time. "LILIAN."

"Now, my dear child, come—begging your pardon, your ladyship! But right into bed in the red room you must go. And I'll put a hot brick to your feet, and bring you up a glass of mulled wine. It's very comforting. No, bless you, the girls nor me won't lie down to-night. And you oughtn't to fret, for the poor child is better off, for this is a hard and cruel world, as I often tell Simpson; but, come now, and I won't forget the brick nor the wine, which is very comforting, dear, when mulled."

## CHAPTER VII.

Ten!

The harsh clock in the hall groaned out the hour.

Eleven!

And still the great dark eyes of the girl, who sat crouched in a corner so still in the little sitting-room, did not close.

Mrs. Simpson had brought her the hot brick, and the mulled wine. But the one could not warm nor the other cheer her. Sleep was not for her; not yet, at least.

And so she sat there. She had not disrobed, and stared with steady, unseeing gaze at a glaringly-coloured lithograph of the King's coronation which hung on the opposite wall.

How strange it was, how very strange, she told herself over and over, that she, Lilian, should be lying here, and Marguerite upstairs dead! It was a horrible world.

She shuddered as she whispered it. And yet why should she be so sorry for her? Poor Marguerite! her life had been harder than those nearest her dreamed.

But she, the Countess of Silverdale—she who was so dear, so precious to a good man's heart; she who had wealth and all the luxury which wealth embraces, waiting on her will; she for whom life blossomed already as the full rose breaks from the bud, crimson and glowing and sweet—ah, thank heaven, she lived!

Twelve!

Behind her had lain a monstrous mistake; its black shadow stretched before. And now, with just perhaps a longer, deeper breath, gently, silently she had gone away from it all.

She could not past off her wretchedness, so she had stolen away, left it. A sudden chill crept over her as she listened. How dreary the clanging strokes sounded! each, she thought, like a clod on a coffin lid!

Ah!

She started to a sitting posture—rose. That locket! She had almost forgotten it.

Her sister always wore it, since he had given it to her.

They had probably found it. She must see; she must secure it—wear it!

She took up the china candlestick which stood on the table beside her. She went softly out of the room, along the corridor, ascended the darkly-carpeted steps.

From the open door at the head a light streamed. Without the wind had grown louder. It tried the door; it howled for entrance on the threshold; it beat like a human thing at the windows; it whistled down the chimney; it moaned eerily through the passages of the rickety old house. And, save the wind, there was no other sound. How weird it all was—almost uncanny!

It seemed to the girl growing slowly, half-dazedly forward like a dream, as though she were wandering through a haunted house in a dream. What verse was that—where had she read it?—

"I lighted my lamp by the dying flame,  
I crept up the stairs that creaked for fright,  
Then into the chamber of death I came,  
Where she lay all in white."

As she reached the landing, a large, dark figure blotted out the light in the doorway.

"Who is there?" cried a fat voice. And then, recognising her, "Ah, my lady, why did you get up? You need rest so badly; and all has been done for the dear young lady. She looks beautiful, as though she just was a-sleeping!"

"Did you?"—a little huskily—"did you find a locket?"

"Yes, my lady, here it is."

She fumbled in the bosom of her dress, produced something from a folded handkerchief, handed it to the Countess.

"A fine looking gentleman, my lady—her sweetheart, I suppose?"

She had opened it, then!

The pretty white fingers closed tightly over the trunket, so tightly the nails cut deep into the palm.

"You have no right to suppose anything!" she said, haughtily.

The broad, red face before her grew mortified.

"I am sure I beg your pardon, my lady; I should not have looked in."

But the tone was more hurt than apologetic.

Well, what did it matter, after all? They would not be likely to meet again. Impassable—the gulf which would lie between the Countess of Silverdale and Mrs. Martin Simpson.

She smiled condescendingly.

"It is really of no importance. The locket is mine. I believe I shall go in."

Mrs. Simpson stood respectfully aside.

She laid her candlestick down on a hall bracket, passed into the quiet room. The woman sitting there rose, courtesied and noiselessly withdrew.

Was it here they had sat and chatted and laughed only this afternoon? Where was the disorder of their dressing-cases, the novels they had been reading, the wraps which were scattered around?

Everything was in the most painfully precise order. The curtains hung straightly; the chairs were ranged against the wall; the little table beside the bed was covered with a white cloth, and on it stood three wax tapers in a battered silver candelabrum. And on the bed!

Still feeling vaguely as if it were only a dream, as if she must wake soon to the everyday life, the reality, she went up to the smooth and snowy couch, looked down.

So still, so fair, so beautiful! Never in life had she seemed half so lovely. The curling hair was brushed softly back. On the marble cheeks the lashes lay dark as night.

Was it imagination, or had the sweet, shut lips a tinge of colour? The watcher might have cried out with Romeo:—

"Death, that hath sucked the honey of thy breath, Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty. Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks, And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

The little hands were lightly clasped upon the coverlet; just a few green leaves between the frozen fingers. Long she beside the bed looked, silently, tearlessly. Then she turned to Mrs. Simpson.

"Go!"

"But, my lady—"

"Go. Come back in a couple of hours. Get some sleep if you can. You are very kind, but I would rather be alone with her."

And when she was alone with her, she closed the door and came back and knelt by the bedside and broke down in low, bitter sobbing.

"It is no dream. I shall not wake. Oh, though your death gives me all the world holds enviable—for I will not lose the game, I swear—I wish you were living, your own, dear, laughing self—I do, oh, my little sister!"

Like a banshee the wind shrieked under the window. Crouching there, whispering softly to her now and then, gradually she grew calmer.

If the wind would only cease its wailing! Why, it jabbered like a thousand demons.

But listen! Was that the wind? A creaking noise, as though someone were fumbling at the lattice.

She did not stir, but gave one swift, side-long look toward the casement.

Even as, cowering against the low bed there, she held her breath and looked, the curtains stirred.

There was a lull in the wind. The stillness seemed fairly tangible.

Something came through the curtains, gently pushing them back—a man's hand.

Great heavens! was it he? Why had he come back? Was he not safe from him even dead?

She leaped to her feet. She was no coward. She rushed forward.

And at that very moment the wind outshrieked afresh, tore the curtains from the cautious, snowy fingers, sent them swirling wildly, set the lights flickering, and revealed in the open-door-like casement a tall, dark figure.

So they confronted each other, not three feet apart. He seemed rooted to the spot with dismay at being discovered.

"How dare you!" she hissed.

He shrank from the stately young figure, the pallid face, the eyes which burned like living coals.

And yet in her heart was an awful fear. What if he knew, after all, it was Lilian who was dead?

"I thought I would just steal a look at Miss Marguerite, my lady, seeing I'd been her servant and yours so long."

Her heart gave one mad bound, then seemed to stand still, while the lights danced fantastically about her, and the wind yelled in her ears. She drew a long breath.

He must not see her, though—not for worlds. Not yet!

Standing between him and the bed, she spoke, calmly, gravely—

"Listen to me," she said. "Reuben Garrett, she is dead. Whatever guilty secret lay between you two, I know not. But this I know. Living, you made her life one weary torture. Now that you have killed her, let her rest."

"Killed her!"

"Yes," she cried, fiercely—"as surely, just as surely, as though you had shot her. I have the revolver you dropped, and I shall keep it. Hush! Not one word! Was I not here—yes, here? No wonder you start. I was lying on yonder lounge. I saw you spring in upon her—terrify her."

Watching his face sharply, she saw that her conjecture was right. The random shot had struck home.

"Her heart was affected, and so you killed her. Don't pursue her dead as you did living. She has found peace at last. For the sake of heaven, who will judge you both, leave her that which she has so dearly won!"

Her voice had risen fuller, sweeter.

A superb piece of acting. Magnificently had she risen to the occasion.

He jerked his hat over his brows. He could not have been wholly depraved. His voice was tremulous when he spoke.

"May I see her at all before—"

He paused.

She considered a moment.

"Yes. To-morrow, in London."

Once again the frenzied wind swept around them. The lights were almost extinguished.

"Thank you, my lady!" very humbly.

If he would only go. A great faintness was creeping over her.

"I wouldn't ask the favour, my lady," he broke out, suddenly, "but I loved her!"

And then he turned, swung himself over the balcony, as he had done a few hours before, rushed into the darkness, and vanished. And not a moment too soon.

He loved her! Sense, sight, life, slipped from her.

Darkness, dense and impenetrable, closed in around her. She fell prone upon the floor.

And so, when the candles were flickering out in their sockets they found her.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

"You poor little thing!" cried Mrs. Stanford, with pitying emphasis.

And she made a rush at her visitor, caught her in her arms, gave her a hug and a kiss, and then fell back with a frown and arranged her cap-strings, as though ashamed of her affectionate outburst.

"I have only a couple of hours in London, Aunt Eliza. We—we go, immediately after some affairs are arranged. Mr. Tennyson is

seeing to everything. I thought I would come to you, if only for a little while."

She stood in the centre of the blue-and-gold reception-room of the great city mansion, a small, black-clad, crape-veiled figure.

"I am glad you did, dear. Here, sit down. I'll ring for tea. You look exhausted. Let me help you take off your things."

"No, no!" She had sunk into a big, puffed chair. "Don't touch me—don't ask me to stir. When I've had a cup of tea I'll go up to your room—your own room, please, it is always so cosy—and lie down there for an hour. I am tired out."

"As you will, dear. Poor Marguerite!—such a shock! You were alone with her, were you not? Tell me the particulars."

Lying back in her chair, sipping the strong, fragrant tea, she told her briefly and clearly the facts of her sister's death.

Mrs. Stanford could hardly be called a handsome woman. She was too tall, too bony, too brown. Her eyes were dark and bright, her tongue and her temper very quick, her speech rapid and ready. She had, moreover, a big, warm, loving heart, but this fact she laboured as industriously to conceal as though its possession were something criminal.

But now, as she sat in the bright September sunshine and listened to the trembling recital of the Countess of Silverdale, wink as hard as she would, she could not keep back the sympathetic tears.

"Poor Marguerite!" she said again. "The dear child—and so young! You were a more general favourite, I know, but I always liked Marguerite. Though, to be sure, she had changed a great deal of late. I noticed it especially at your wedding. She seemed so excitable, so full of moods. Did you remark it?"

The Countess laid down her cup, and rose.

"Yes. And now may I go to your room?"

"Certainly—come! It has been a fearful ordeal for you, Lilian. And your husband away, too. I read all about the burning of the convent. And you and Margaret were so attached always! Dear, dear!"

The Countess was regarding her steadily.

"You look as young as ever, Aunt Eliza."

The elder woman was dressed in stiff brocade, a very elaborate cap of lace and artificial flowers perched on her suspiciously-black head.

They were in the bedroom now.

"Yes, dear; but I wouldn't, only for Do

Losset."

A faint, amused smile flitted over the face of her listener.

"You still use his dye?"

"It isn't a dye, child. It is simply a restorative—encourages growth. If my hair happens to be white and the elixir happens to be black, that is no reason, is it, I should not use it?"

"Of course not!" She walked to the massive mahogany dressing-case, took up a vial standing thereon. "This is it. I remember you had it when Marguerite and I were here last. Have you more than this, Aunt Eliza?"

"Half-a-dozen bottles. Why?"

"I want you to give me some to take down to Mrs. Allan—our housekeeper, you know. She uses the most distracting restoratives. They shade off into blue or green."

"Cheap ones always do. Here, I'll put these in your travelling-bag. Tell her one application dyes in fifteen minutes, and is warranted a perfect restorative. Now I'll go. Try and rest, poor child!"

And she went away.

Instantly the Countess sprang up, secured the door, flung off her bonnet and veil, hastened to the mirror, undid her braided hair, glanced at her watch, took up her aunt's precious vial, and began to apply the contents to her tresses with light, deft touches—just as she had seen her aunt do many a time.

Five minutes passed—fifteen, twenty. And still, her task done, she stood there and stared at herself.



It was a marvellous compound—that of the little old Frenchman her aunt patronised.

Others might notice slight change, if any—black hair has shifting lights, which makes it sometimes seem brown—but to her the difference was very marked.

"I could fancy," she whispered, to her glowing-eyed reflection in the mirror, "that you were Lillian. But you are—yes, you must not forget it—you are Lillian! Marguerite—poor Marguerite—is dead!"

"So good of you to have come here!" her aunt exclaimed, as half-an-hour later, the Countess resumed her bonnet and jacket in her presence, and went down to her father's solicitor, who awaited her with a carriage. "So very thoughtful of you to have come to see me!"

The Countess smiled—sadly, though, as became the occasion—kissed her aunt, took the proffered arm of her escort, entered the vehicle, and was driven away.

And now behind her veil she smiled to herself, and this time not sadly.

It was not altogether thoughtful goodness which had taken her to see her aunt—not altogether!

Down at the Honour all was gloom, grief, depression.

The rooms were darkened, and in them reigned that heavy silence which the King of Terrors brings ever in his train.

Sir Stuart Woodville looked oddly aged and feeble as he walked up and down the hall. He was a hale, well-preserved man, but he seemed to have grown suddenly old.

It was a terrible blow to him. He had no energy left with which to recuperate. All at once, the sweet, green world he loved had become a desolate and dismal place.

"You are all I have now—and I have not you!" he had said, when the coffin had been carried into the library, and the assumed Countess lay sobbing in his arms. "You belong to Harold."

"No, no; you must not see her yet!" she cried hastily, as he would have entered. "Wait till I bring flowers—she always loved them. Wait till she looks more like Marguerite. Let me dress her—for the last time!"

How excited she was! how full of strength, resource, decision!

In and out of the darkened library she hurried—now with an armful of autumnal blooms, now with a fluffy cloud of lace.

At the latter, her aunt, sitting subdued and red-eyed by the mantel in the hall, exclaimed in astonishment—

"Why, that is your wedding-veil, Lillian!"

"I know. It is none too good for her."

And she was gone.

When she admitted them at last she was flushed with exertion and fatigue. Her eyes shone large and dark.

"Oh, my little Lillian!" Sir Stuart murmured, brokenly.

Mrs. Vere broke out crying.

Very fair and calm and sweet looked the face below.

"There stark she on her carved bed,  
Seven burning tapers about her feet,  
And seven about her head!"

Wrapped around the head almost to the brows was a mass of delicate, priceless lace. And lying loosely drifted over her were late white roses. From the nest of lace and velvety blooms shone the peaceful face. Across it the waxlight fell.

She might have been asleep, the old man told himself, mournfully.

He fancied the lips held a faint tinge of bloom. But, no—ah, no! this was the sleep which knows no waking!

After much urging, the Countess prevailed on Sir Stuart and his sister to seek refreshment.

"I can't go! How could I eat? Never mind—I shan't be sick. Go, I tell you—I cannot! I am choking!"

They were gone but a few minutes, and she was still standing where they had left her, when her quick ear caught the sound of a heavy and rather irregular tread without.

She knew it!

She caught her breath gaspingly. She had wondered all day why he had not appeared.

He had come at last!

Swiftly, noiselessly, before the newcomer had time to knock, she crossed the hall, softly opened the door—held it ajar.

"Come in!" coldly.

Why had she promised him he might see the dead? Was it a challenge to herself? Was it dare-devil recklessness? Or was it a desperate desire to subject her mad plot to a powerful test?

She did not regret her promise for fear of discovery. No; there was no danger now of that, she thought, exultingly.

But she hated the sight of his face; she loathed his very presence.

He followed her across the hall, under the dimly-burning, brazen lamps—into the chamber of the dead.

He turned and closed the door behind him.

"Why do you do that?" she cried, sharply.

He looked down on the slender figure in the black, trailing gown.

"Because I have a word to say to you alone!"

He was beside the coffin now. He looked down, his handsome, brooding face dark and set.

"To me?"

He lifted his head; he glanced at her significantly, then pointed downward.

"Yes—about her!"

And now she saw what she till now had failed to notice—that his light clothes were stained and dirty, his cravat awry, his hands shaking, his eyes fishy and yet lurid.

She knew in a flash he had been drinking.

"I don't wish to hear it!" she said, hot with scornful anger. "You had better go!"

It was not a wise speech.

He straightened himself defiantly, put his hands behind him, and looked at her across the coffin.

"I don't suppose you want to hear it," slowly, and between his clenched teeth, "but you see you've got to all the same."

Their eyes met.

A strange picture, in truth. The pretty, soft-rugged, book-lined, dimly-illuminated old room; in the centre a coffin, from which shone lace, roses, and a woman's dead face; and facing each other across it, quiet as duellists waiting their signal, these two!

She, small, dark-clad and dark-haired, pale now, and pretty, and proud as Lucifer; he, tall, slovenly as to attire, his fine face half stupid, half fierce; he, with coarse hands; he, redolent of the stable-yard. A tremendous contrast, indeed!

"Well," she said, coldly, "say it, and then go."

"What I want, then, is this—a thousand pounds to keep her secret."

And again he pointed downward.

She actually laughed. Her courage grew stronger every moment.

"You know no secret of hers. If you did, who would believe you? You think because I am a woman you can blackmail me. But you don't know me!"

Her colour had rushed back; her beautiful eyes met his once more, glittering and unflinching.

She was a brave one; she had pluck, he said to himself.

"So I don't know no secret of hers?" slowly, and with cunning, half-shut eyes.

"Well, there I differ with you. Do you want me to tell Sir Stuart what I know?"

"Coward!" she hissed. "Do you think he would believe you? He would have you horsewhipped from the demesne!"

"He would, eh?"

He leaned across the coffin till she could feel his breath upon her cheeks.

"And what," he snarled, "if I brought proof?"

"Proof!" For just a moment she grew giddy, "What proof?"

"This!"—involuntarily she retreated; his body writhed like a snake across the coffin; his evil face was close to hers—"this!" And mark you, I can bring it here—her child!"

"Oh!"

She reeled backward, sick, blind. That had struck home.

"You cannot!" she panted, rallying.

"You lie! Her child died!"

Silence. Then she heard wheels rolling up the avenue.

What was that? A laugh? Yes, a laugh, mocking, amusing, exultant. He was standing there with crossed arms, coarse and bleary-eyed.

"And so," still laughing insolently, "you admit her motherhood!"

Oh, Father of mercy, what had she said!

A faint, waiting cry escaped her. In her quivering excitement she did not hear the fall of the muffled knocker.

The door opened. Someone, tall, brown-bearded, travel-stained, came into the softly-lit room.

He! Desperation, frantic, wild, took possession of her.

She sprang forward—beyond the coffin—was across the room.

She flung herself upon his breast, and clung there as one drowning clings to a spar.

"Harold," she cried, "my darling—my husband! Turn that man out! He has insulted me. Turn him out!"

"Go, sir!"

The Earl of Silverdale had flung his arm around the shaking but defiant little figure beside him.

With his disengaged hand he pointed authoritatively to the door.

Who was the fellow?

Ah, yes, he recognised him now! That handsome devil of a groom who used to take his horse.

But how in the name of all that was outrageous came he here?

Reuben Garrett staggered a step forward.

"I'll go when I get ready," he jeered.

The commotion had attracted attention. Sir Stuart Woodville and Mrs. Vere came hurrying up the hall, at the lower end of which stood a little knot of servants.

"What does this mean?" demanded the master of the Honour, sharply.

"It means I was telling this fine lady here a few facts about her—"

"Don't let him say it, Harold!" she cried, hoarsely. "He is lying!"

Even as she spoke his arm dropped from her. One swift spring, and his white hands were twisted in the groom's flashy cravat.

As long as he could, because of the presence there, he had held his indignation in check.

Now he was merciless. The attack was so sudden, so undreamed of, the other was not prepared. His head shook under the Earl's grip till they could hear his teeth chattering.

Really a stronger man than the Earl, he seemed incapable of proper resistance.

He struck out savagely, blindly. A few powerful jerks, and Harold had him at the hall door. The latter stood ajar. With his foot he pushed it farther open. A last strong, wrenching swing, and he had flung the resisting intruder, still squirming and swearing, headlong out, and closed the door behind him.

He sauntered back to where the others stood, silent and dismayed.

"A good deed, Harold!" Sir Stuart said. "The man was drunk."

"Yes. But," ruefully regarding his hands, which he was rubbing with his cambric handkerchief, "if I only had not taken off my gloves. Why, I had to touch the fellow!"

"Such a disturbance! I really thought I should expire!" declared Aunt Clara, clasping her plump hands excitedly. "Just as we were eating the curry, I heard the voices. A really delicious curry, too!"

"Well, well, go back and finish it!" advised her brother, testily. "Bless my soul! where's Lillian? Ah, yes, I see! Come away, Clara. They can exist without our society."

In one of the straight-backed hall chairs sat the Countess—just where she had sat the night Harold had mistaken her for her sister. She remembered the moment with a shudder.

She felt stunned and heartsick. Garriett's declaration was startling in the extreme. Was it true? Oh, she wondered so if it were really true!

"My poor little Lillian, how you start! You are nervous, dear! And no wonder. This has been a sad ordeal for you."

Harold was leaning against her chair, rubbing gently the little cold hand he had taken. "Yes."

Her stiff lips barely formed the word. She felt exhausted. Even his caresses aroused her not at all.

Could she keep it up, she was asking herself, helplessly—could she?

Not for days, but for months, perhaps for years and years. Would she not sometimes want to confess it all, to scream it out, the whole wretched secret, the whole perilous plot?

No, no! She must keep it up. There was no retreating now. All her bridges were burned behind her, and she would be happy yet. Why should her life be a blank—worse than a blank, a perpetual misery—just because her sister died? If that death had opened for her the door to love, luxury, and all the good things of life, should she fear to cross the threshold of the place wherein they lay?

Fear! who said fear? She knew no such word. She looked up into the grave, handsome face bending over her.

"It was awful, Harold! It quite unnerved me. But now with you I am brave again."

And she smiled brightly.

"Ah, now you look more like my Lillian!" he said, approvingly. "I hardly knew you so sombre and sad. You were just now that queer, brooding look which made poor Marguerite unlike you—like as she was."

"Ah, poor Marguerite!" she sighed.

She shivered as she rose.

"You have not told me yet, how is Iva?"

"Recovering rapidly. There was quite a romance connected with her rescue. I shall tell you about it later. Just now I want a bite of supper; I'm half-famished."

Very late they sat talking. Two or three times when he called her by name she did not move. Again, when he referred to an incident of his wedding tour, she looked at him blankly.

"You poor child! You are so dazed with trouble you can hardly hear or remember," he cried, kissing her.

She gave him a quiet glance, but there was adoration in it.

How good he was! how noble and thoughtful and kind! Truly had Bayard Taylor written—

"The bravest are the tenderest,

The loving are the daring."

And what comfort there was in his presence! what a sense of security, of protection, of peace!

And so while she

"Sat by the dying fire and thought

Of the dear, dead woman downstairs."

her heart was gladder than it had been for many a day.

An insane gladness? Perhaps. But the presence of the man she loved, the knowledge that in all the days to come his love and his strength would be her refuge and her shield, elated, transfigured her.

Back to her grey eyes came the light, to her cheek the glow.

And so the night wore on. For her the closing arms, the passionate kisses, the loving words; and for her who lay below, rigid and cold in her snowy roses and satin and lace—what?

(To be continued next week.)

This story commenced in No. 2,061. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.

### "HARD UP"

One of the affectations of the day is to boast of being poor—that is, if the boaster is not poor. Those who have really felt the pinch of poverty do not allude to it carelessly; to them there is nothing humorous in being "hard up." It is only persons who are dressed in the height of fashion, and bear every sign of being well to do, who boast of their poverty. Strangely enough, the very people who talk most openly of being poor are the ones most hard and severe in their censure of those pursue proud persons who make a parade of their wealth and boast of their money bags, indeed, if not in actual words, though what difference there is between these two forms of affectation it would be difficult to state. To the ordinary mortal they seem about equal in point of merit or demerit, for surely, if it is vulgar to talk about being rich, it is equally vulgar to talk of being poor and hard up. The first sort of talk is done with an object, no doubt. The speakers think and hope it will give them greater importance, and make them better known and more thought of. But, as a rule, people who talk of their poverty have no especial object in view; they talk thus because it is the fashion to affect poverty in words, though never, if they can help it, in deeds. "All the best people are hard up nowadays," is the remark that one constantly hears, and as naturally every one wishes to be included among "the best," everyone who is anybody, as the saying is, repeats the shibboleth of being hard up in the brightest of voices and with the most radiant of smiles.

There are cases, however, when this affectation is used as an excuse for some little meanness that not only looks but is a mean act, when done by people who can afford to behave differently. Can we not all recall some instance when this plea has been brought forward, and we have heard the words that, spoken as an excuse, sounded almost as an accusation, "You see, I'm so awfully hard up just now?"

### THE WAY OF IT

This is the way of it, wide world over;

One is beloved, and one is the lover;

One gives, and the other receives,

One lavishes all in a wild emotion,

One offers a smile for a life's devotion;

One hopes, and the other believes.

One lies awake in the night to weep,

And the other drifts into a sweet sound sleep.

One soul is aflame with a god-like passion,

One plays with love in an idler's fashion;

One speaks, and the other hears.

One sobs "I love you," and wet eyes show it,

And one laughs lightly and says, "I know it,"

With smiles for the other's tears.

One lives for the other and nothing beside,

And the other remembers the world is wide.

This is the way of it, sad earth over;

The heart that breaks is the heart of the lover,

And the other learns to forget.

For what is the use of endless sorrow?

Though the sun goes down, it will rise to-morrow,

And life is not over yet.

Oh! I know this truth, if I know no other,

That Passionate Love is Pain's own mother.

## Gems

THE secret of influence is will, whether good or bad.

WOMAN lives by sentiment where man lives by action.

Be sure that God ne'er dooms to waste the strength He deigns impart.

MEN may be born with fortune ready made, but character they have to achieve.

He is a wise man who wastes no energy on pursuits for which he is not fitted.

A MAN too busy to take care of his health is like a workman too busy to sharpen his tools.

DON'T build the gingerbread house of cheap reputation on the bubble foundation of inexperience.

WHEN interest is at variance with conscience, any pretence that seems to reconcile them satisfies the hollow-hearted.

Be not disturbed about the future, for if ever you come to it you will have the same reason for your guide which preserves you at present.

He who sits down in a dungeon which another has made has not such cause to bewail himself as he who sits down in the dungeon which he has made for himself.

### TOO KIND

The pathetic stories of suffering and distress caused by neglect that one hears almost daily, says a writer in a contemporary, leads one to take a view of the other side of the picture, the burdensome kindness, the over-assiduous attentions of friends who mean the best things for their victim, who, for his part, would bless them for some of that neglect which has caused others to suffer. To be delivered from one's friends has been the prayer of many. "Killed by kindness" might be the epitaph on many a tombstone. How often has not merely the sick person, but the tired, the distraught, the nerve-shaken, craved as the greatest boon his imagination could suggest, the privilege of quiet, of that solitariness which for many has such terrors. A young man suffering from nervous trouble recently was the recipient of the most anxious care from his affectionate parents. The doctor visited him at all hours. A trained nurse occupied the same room with him. Solicitous friends hovered over him. One night he disappeared, and for ten days continuous search was made, while the gravest fears were entertained concerning his safety. Finally it was discovered that a board had been removed from an entrance into a low lean-to of the barn, and there he was found. He had rested there, stealing out in the night to visit his mother's pantry, and returning for seclusion and quiet. The experience had materially helped his unsettled condition. He found himself approaching distraction through over-solicitous care of affectionate friends, and he only avoided it by taking his case into his own hands. Rest is a great remedy, but rest means more than one thing. It does not mean simply lying in bed or swinging in a hammock, but repose of mind and tranquillity of spirit, and the next time the writer feels prompted to visit a sick friend he may have quite a debate with himself as to whether he cannot do him a greater kindness by remaining away.

BACK - ACTION ENTERTAINMENT. — Young Clammy (with a tremendous idea of his conversational powers): "My mother will be down in a few minutes, Miss Keene. Can't I entertain you until she comes?" Miss Keene: "How good of you, Mr. Clammy! Will you be kind enough to watch my coachman out of the window and see that he keeps his cape buttoned up tightly? The poor fellow is so delicate, you know."



# ROSALIND'S VOW

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

UNTIL we have tried it none of us know how difficult it is to get rid of anything, especially the evidence of crime! No matter what it may be—a knife, a handkerchief, a pistol—the mere fact of its having been connected with some dark deed seems to have cast an evil spell upon it that makes it imperishable. Would we burn it? We fear a witness. Would we throw into the deep, silent river? It is washed up again within a few hours. Would we hide it? The horrid thing refuses to be hidden. Earth rejects it, and it is left a terrible witness of the eternal retribution.

Thus it was with the box of jewels, for the possession of which Vansittart had sacrificed a fellow-creature's life.

Directly he read in the papers accounts of the "Crowthorne murder," as it was called, he knew that, until he could get rid of the jewels he was in peril of being identified as the murderer. It is true no list of them was cut yet, but one would certainly appear before long, and such articles as jewellery would be easy enough to trace.

He was in the same dilemma regarding the stocks and shares which were in the box. He dared not attempt to convert them into money, and his impulse was to throw them all into the fire, but second thoughts restrained him. They represented a large total, and, perhaps, when the storm had blown over, and he was safely out of the country, he might be able to dispose of them. One thing, he was in no want of money, for the box had both sovereigns and bank-notes, and these were sufficient to keep him afloat for some time.

He was not the sort of man to miss an opportunity for want of boldness, and, after thinking over his position, he made up his mind that the sooner he left England the better, and Rosalind must go with him!

On the day following his visit to the house at Chiswick a visitor came to his chamber—Gaston, the man who had been instrumental in the abduction of Rosalind.

He had come for the purpose of receiving his promised reward, and his dismay may be imagined when Vansittart met him with the news that he had made a mistake in the lady!

"However," added Vansittart, "I can hardly blame you under the circumstances, and I will give you an opportunity of atoning for your error. I must tell you that I am contemplating a voyage to America. You are by way of being a sailor. Are you inclined to go with me?"

The man hesitated a moment, then said,—"Yes; conditionally."

Vansittart laughed.

"I see. You mean if I make it worth your while?"

"That it what I did mean, sir."

"Well, set your mind at rest on that score. I will not only make it worth your while, but will pay you well."

"In that case I'm your man. When might you be wanting to start?"

"As soon as possible—that is to say, as soon as a vessel can be fitted out for the voyage. My yacht, the Nikita, is lying at Gravesend, and what I want you to do is to supply her with the necessary stores, and find me a crew—trustworthy. You understand?"

Gaston nodded.

"When do you think this can be done?"

"Before I answer that question, sir, allow me to put one to you. Is money an object?"

"It is not."

"Then the vessel will be ready to start by the morning after to-morrow. Will that do?"

"Perfectly," returned Vansittart, and he

gave his worthy coadjutor further instructions, supplemented by a bag of gold.

When all the necessary arrangements had been made he added:

"And now to take you into my confidence. I want to get the lady you mistook for my wife on board the Nikita, and, as she is not exactly willing to make the projected trip with me, we must exercise a little diplomacy. As you know, the garden of the Lodge slopes down to the river; and my plan is that you should bring a boat there, and we will then place the lady in it, and pull down as far as Gravesend. Will the tide suit, by the way?"

Gaston took a little card from his pocket, and glanced down it.

"Yes! The water begins to ebb about eleven o'clock, and we can go down with the tide. But how shall you manage if the lady objects?"

Vansittart smiled significantly.

"We must give her something that will render her more amenable, as you have already done once before. Trust me for managing that. Now, do you perfectly understand my instructions?—secrecy and despatch."

Gaston answered in the affirmative, and soon afterwards took his departure, and in the evening Vansittart wrapped the jewel-box in a large piece of canvas, and took it with him in a cab to Chiswick—for in his chambers there was not hiding-place secure enough to conceal it for long; whereas, at the Lodge, there was an iron safe let into the wall of one of the rooms, which it would take a very clever detective to discover. In this safe he determined to place the compromising box, and it would then be ready to take down to the boat the next evening.

The door was opened as before by the dark saturnine-looking woman, whom Vansittart called "Diana," and he followed her into the sitting-room, where she had evidently been reading, for a newspaper was on the table, and Vansittart's eyes fell on the heading, in large letters, "The Crowthorne Murder!"

He turned on her savagely, his face livid, his eyes glowing like two coals.

"What the devil do you want to fill the house with these horrors for?" he cried, in a rage, as he crumpled up the newspaper in one hand, and flung it into the farthest corner. "Don't you think you are morbid and gloomy enough as it is without curling your blood with all sorts of penny-a-line details?"

Diana looked surprised at this unexpected and, apparently, senseless exhibition of fury; but she was used to Mr. Vansittart's ways, and she simply shrugged her shoulders and sat down by the fire again.

"You seem out of temper, mon ami. What ails you now?"

He swept his hand across his brow, and looked at her in a strangely bewildered manner. He was a man of iron nerves, and yet the sight of that newspaper on the table containing details of the murder that he had committed came upon him as a sort of shock, and it required all his resolution to keep calm.

"I am not well, I think," he responded, in answer to the housekeeper's question. "I feel nervous and upset. Have you got any brandy in the house?"

"Yes. There is a bottle in the cupboard."

"Then, for Heaven's sake, give it me!"

She got up and produced the bottle and a tumbler, which he half filled with the spirit, and then drank, undiluted. The housekeeper watched him in curious silence.

"I should think your throat is burnt," she observed, after he had swallowed the spirit.

He laughed unpleasantly.

"My throat is pretty well acclimatised to fiery liquids by this time. You ought to know that!"

"I have never seen you drink so much spirit without water before!"

"Haven't you? Well, one must have a beginning. I am out of sorts to-night, and require stimulating."

After this he sat for a quarter of an hour or so, quite silent, leaning his head on his hand, and gazing moodily into the fire.

Vansittart's energy seemed suddenly to have deserted him, and he could not even summon sufficient to enable him to carry out his plan of seeing Rosalind. The remembrance of her flashing eyes and undaunted mien returned to him very forcibly, and he felt she was certainly not the sort of woman to be coerced or threatened.

And yet he had resolved that, come what might, she should accompany him to the New World, for his lawless passion, and the perilous position in which he was quite aware he stood, had combined to make him reckless. He was in a dangerous mood, and inclined to brave consequences.

He was aroused from his reverie by the housekeeper, who said, grimly:

"I should like to know, if you don't object, what you are going to do with the lady upstairs?"

He collected himself with an effort, and thought for a moment before answering.

"I have not quite made up my mind. As I told you this morning, there has been an egregious blunder. It was my wife I intended bringing here, not Miss Grant."

The housekeeper looked at him suspiciously.

"If that is the case, why don't you set her at liberty?"

"Because she will go and publish what has happened, and spoil all my plans. You must see that yourself."

"I see nothing, except what I am told to see," said the housekeeper, her lips curling with supreme self-contempt. "All I know is that this one is no meek lamb, who will sit and waste her strength in tears and repinings, but a resolute woman, bent on escape."

"What has she been doing, then?"

"Well, first of all, she broke two or three panes of glass, and tried the bars across the window to see if they would yield. She found they wouldn't, so then she screamed at the top of her voice for help, and some man came to the door to know what was the matter. I told him that the lady was mad, and he was satisfied and went away; but if this sort of thing goes on, further inquiries will be made, and the police will interfere. Besides," her eyes flashed ominously, "I do not like the business at all, and I have some right to be considered. You haven't been frank with me—you are keeping something back. I am inclined to think the 'mistake,' as you call it, of bringing this girl here, instead of your wife, was not accidental."

"And I tell you it was. Confound these women!" he muttered, sotto voce, as he poured out some more brandy and drank it. "How full of suspicion they are! One needs the diplomacy of a Talleyrand to manage them." Then he added, aloud, "I will see Miss Grant, and try and come to terms with her; and, by-the-way, have you got anything in the house for supper? I am hungry, for I have had no dinner. Go out and bring in a bottle of champagne, and we will have supper together."

He gave her a sovereign; and she, after a little apparent hesitation, took it and left the room.

A few minutes later he heard the hall-door shut, and knew that she had gone, and then he rose and took up the jewel-box, which up to the present had been lying at his feet. Carrying it in his two hands, he went upstairs and listened outside Rosalind's door.

All was silent, and satisfied that she was either sleeping or exhausted, he entered the adjoining room—carefully locking the door after him.

It was a small apartment, and had been used by his father as a study. There was very

little furniture in it—a writing-table, a couple of easy chairs, and an office stool. The iron safe was invisible, for it was set in the wall itself, and, as has been said before, so artfully concealed that the most careful observer would have had some difficulty in discovering it. On the opposite side of the room was a second door, and this led into the next apartment—poor Rosalind's prison.

Vansittart struck a match, lighted a candle, and then pressed the spring of the safe, which caused a door—papered like the rest of the wall—to fly open. Then the safe was revealed, and he proceeded to open it—all his movements being marked with the extreme caution that he knew to be necessary.

Suddenly he paused. A slight noise had struck on his ear, and he looked round to see from whence it proceeded. At the same moment the second door—that is to say, the door leading to the next room—was gently pushed open, and Rosalind herself stood in the aperture.

Poor Rosalind! From the height of elation her face fell to the depth of despair. Quietly, patiently, persistently, she had been working with her penknife round the lock of the door, thinking that if she could only manage to get into the next apartment she might have a chance of escape. The door was not a very thick one, and her perseverance at last met with its reward—the woodwork became completely detached from the lock, and the door opened.

Then—when hope was beating high at her heart—she found her plans all frustrated, for Vansittart himself confronted her.

A sick feeling of utter hopelessness seized her, and she leaned against the framework, her hands hanging loosely at her side and her eyes fixed on the floor. Standing thus she looked inexpressibly beautiful—like some marble statue, for her face was white as alabaster itself.

Of course Vansittart at once comprehended the situation; and he, too, stood for a few moments silently regarding her. The box was on the floor, and the safe was open, but he forgot both in the thrill of passionate admiration that the sight of his lovely woman woke in his breast.

"Mr. Vansittart!" cried Rosalind, at last, in a supplicating voice, "I implore you by every vestige of manly—I will not say gentlemanly—feeling to set me free. I will promise anything—everything, that you may demand if you will only give me my liberty!"

"Ah!" he returned, with a slight sneer. "My lady is not quite so imperious as she was yesterday morning! She finds the bars of her prison are stronger than she thought, and so she condescends to make terms."

"Yes," said the girl, who during the long hours of the day had had time to realise more fully than ever how completely she was in the power of this unscrupulous man. "I give you an unconditional promise not to breathe a word of what has happened. Will that satisfy you?"

"I am not sure that it will."

"Oh! for Heaven's sake, have pity on me!" she cried, frantically. "See—I kneel to you—I who have never sued to anyone in my life before. I will think of you with gratitude—yes, gratitude. I will forget your sin and remember only its expiation. Prove yourself merciful—prove yourself human, and recollect it is a helpless woman who prays to you—"

She broke off abruptly, the words faltering on her lips. There was no pity in his gaze—only a triumphant exultation, mingled with something that looked like ferocity.

The brandy Mr. Vansittart had drunk was beginning to have its effect.

Accustomed as he was to potent spirits, it was rarely enough that he took them neat, or in such quantities as he had this evening, and although it could not be said that he was in the slightest degree intoxicated, he was, nevertheless, very far from the cautious, far-seeing man

of the world that he flattered himself upon being as a rule.

"You look like your sister now!" he said, leaning his arms on the back of a chair, and never removing his gaze from her face, "only you are even handsomer than Maraquita was."

In an instant Rosalind had sprung to her feet—herself forgotten in the overwhelming interest excited by his speech.

"Maraquita! What do you know of her?" He laughed gently, and stroked his moustache with one white, jewelled hand. If a third person had been by the movement would have reminded him irresistibly of a cat playing with a mouse—the suave urbane cruelty of Vansittart's look and manner were far more dangerous than any overt brutality.

"What did I know of her? Ah! you asked me that question once before, and I did not answer it. Now I feel inclined to gratify your curiosity. The tale will at least serve to illustrate the fact that I am not the sort of man to let a woman defy me with impunity. Yes, I will tell you the history of my acquaintance with Maraquita De Belvoir, and I am quite sure I shall have no right to complain of inattention on your part."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

Vansittart still leaned on the back of the chair, standing in front of the open safe, which, in the excitement of the moment, he had entirely forgotten to close.

The lamp was placed on the table between him and Rosalind, and its light fell on both their faces—hers white and strained, his fair, handsome, wickedly mocking.

"In the old days my people and the Hawtreys were friends. The two families had been intimate for some generations, and our respective parents wished Kenneth and myself to perpetuate the friendship. Truth to tell, we never took very kindly to each other, even when we were at college together—our natures were as unsympathetic as our pursuits. Nevertheless, after I left Oxford, I was invited to King's Royal by Lady Hawtreys, Sir Kenneth's mother, and it was there that I had the pleasure of meeting the very handsome young lady who was called Maraquita De Belvoir, and who was Lady Hawtreys's companion. I see, you are already deeply interested."

And indeed she was. Her eyes were fixed on his, and she followed each word he spoke with as vivid an attention as if her life depended on the next syllable.

It was characteristic of Vansittart that at this juncture he should draw a cigar from his case, deliberately light it, and draw two or three whiffs before he went on with his narrative.

"Well, when I got to King's Royal first, Kenneth himself was not there, so I was rather hard-up for amusement, and it was, therefore, natural that I should employ my spare time in talking to the companion."

"Lady Hawtreys was an indolent, good-natured, fine lady, and it did not seem to strike her that there was any harm in my paying Miss De Belvoir attention; consequently, I used to take the young lady for walks, play croquet with her—tennis was not fashionable in those days—and occasionally read poetry to her. One day, I remember, we had a dispute about a quotation, which she said was from Pope, and I said was from Byron—she was so sure she was right. When I asked her to back her opinion she readily consented, and so we made a bet, the stake being a locket that she habitually wore, and one that I wore. Well, I was correct in my author, and she lost; so I took the locket, and also a miniature of Maraquita which was inside—you saw it that night I drove you to Weir Cottage. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember."

"And you asked me how it came into my possession. I did not tell you the whole truth, but I told you part of it, for Maraquita herself had informed me that the locket was a

charm brought from the Indies, and given to her when a child."

"That was so," murmured Rosalind, unconsciously.

"And I, not being altogether devoid of superstition, determined to wear it, and have worn it ever since. It is a long time ago, for I was very young then, and very foolish. As a proof of my youth and foolishness I fell in love with Maraquita, and I had every reason to suppose—at least, I thought I had—that she reciprocated the feeling."

"It was at this interesting juncture Sir Kenneth came home, and directly afterwards I noticed a difference in Miss De Belvoir's treatment of me. Her fickle fancy changed, or she was true to her sex, and attracted by a title. Anyway, she metaphorically fell down at Sir Kenneth's feet and worshipped him."

"I never saw such a case of passionate affection in my life, and, to do Hawtreys justice, I must confess that he did not encourage her. It was true he admired her—no man could help it—but he made no efforts to seek her out, and he was quite content to be away from her. He was far from a vain man, and the real state of affairs did not seem to strike him, neither was he keen enough to see that I was desperately jealous of him."

"While matters were in this state I was suddenly called away by the illness of my father. Angry as I was to leave just then, the summons was one that I dare not disobey; so I left King's Royal, and a week afterwards my father died. I was his only son, and a great deal of business therefore devolved on me, so that I could not leave town, otherwise I should have hurried down to King's Royal again to see Maraquita. However, about a fortnight after my father's death I met Sir Kenneth at the club, and then he told me that he was engaged to Maraquita, but the engagement, in accordance with her wish, had not as yet been publicly announced."

Vansittart paused a moment, and, for the first time, his eyes were turned away from Rosalind. His face grew a little paler, and he bit angrily at his moustache. Even this lapse of time had not been sufficient to dull his resentment, or to render less bitter his malignancy against Sir Kenneth for supplanting him.

"I have reminded you before that I was young, and also that I was a fool, so you will not be surprised to hear that I was furious at Sir Kenneth's news. (I am older and wiser now, and I know that no woman in the world is worth making so much fuss about!)" he added, in parentheses. "However, although I did not actually betray myself, I could not help his seeing that I was considerably upset at the intelligence, and he asked me what was the matter. I told him I was Maraquita's lover, and in proof of my words, I showed him the locket, with her likeness inside it, hanging on to my watch chain."

"He was dumfounded at the sight, and declared his intention of going back to King's Royal at once, and taxing her with her treachery. Before doing so, I begged him to come to my room, where I said I would show him some letters of hers, and this he promised to do."

"Accordingly, some two hours later he came, and then I put into his hands a poem, written by Maraquita, and enclosed in an envelope addressed to me. The poem was a passionate love story, and I think the sight of it even was sufficient to startle him, for he had certain English notions of propriety, and they were outraged by the fervid language of the stanzas he read."

"But," cried Rosalind, whose lips were blanched to an awful whiteness, "Maraquita never wrote that to you!"

"No; but she wrote it for me. I had asked her to translate a Spanish poem, and she had done so—as she would have probably done had Lady Hawtreys asked her. This, however, Sir Kenneth did not know, and taken in conjunction with my word, and the locket, it con-



vinced him that I was Maraquita's lover before he himself appeared on the scene. If you have studied his character at all. I need not tell you that he was not the man to play second fiddle, or to stand such behaviour as this on the part of his "fiancée," and he at once declared his engagement at an end. He intended going back to King's Royal, but I persuaded him against doing so. I said it would only produce a complication, the result of which would be very unpleasant for Lady Hawtreys.

"Kenneth would have done anything in the world to save his mother annoyance, so he allowed himself to be convinced, and in the end wrote a letter to Maraquita, simply telling her that he broke off the engagement, and the next day he sailed for Egypt. Have I made everything clear to you now?"

Rosalind said never a word, but she gazed past him into vacancy, and it seemed as if she had actually forgotten his presence. Her faculties were under an icy spell, and the only thing that appeared before her with any clearness was that she and Sir Kenneth had both been the victims of a gigantic mistake.

She had condemned him, and he was innocent!

"Oh!" she cried out, presently, wringing her hands. "What have I done—what have I done! I have ruined the noblest life—broken the noblest heart! Kenneth, Kenneth, forgive me!"

Her head fell on her breast, she burst into an anguished storm of sobs that all her fortitude could not restrain. Everything else faded into significance before the one fact of her husband's innocence of the crime she had imputed to him.

Vansittart watched her with a cruel smile.

"You, too, have been labouring under a misapprehension, I believe, and you have played my game very prettily. I think now I may cry 'quits' with Sir Kenneth Hawtreys."

She took no notice of the sneer. Headless of his presence she paced the limits of the room, backwards and forwards, her hands clasped, her beautiful eyes staring straight in front of her, but seeing nothing. The past was rising vividly before her—her introduction to Sir Kenneth, their strange courtship and stranger wedding, followed by that awful scene in the wood beside Maraquita's nameless grave.

Poor Maraquita! with her passionate southern nature and fiery temper, and Spanish notions of revenge which she had so fatally inculcated in her child-sister! Dearly enough had Rosalind paid for that rash vow, whose consequences nothing could redeem.

She understood everything now, understood that Maraquita had been the victim of her own passions and a wicked man's treachery—understood, too, how Kenneth had acted throughout like the honourable, upright gentleman he was!

Oh! how she revered him! how she loved him now that it was too late!

Too late!

But was it too late? Could she not even now see him, explain everything to him, humble her pride into the dust, and beg him, for the sake of the love he once bore her—for the sake of the love she now bore him—to take her back?

Alas! no. Her sin against him had been too deep. There could be no expiation!

Like a knell came the remembrance of the words he had spoken under the dark shadow of the dripping trees,—

"Understand this, Rosalind, your decision, whatever it may be, is irrevocable! Nothing that you may do or say later will induce me to rescind it! The choice is yours now; after to-day it will be so no longer!"

And she had made her choice, and must abide by it. She had sown the wind, could she therefore complain if she reaped the whirlwind?

Vansittart's voice startled Rosalind from her meditation.

"Well, you have not told me yet what im-

pression my story has made on you; and as I set a great value on your opinion, I should like to hear it."

She turned on him fiercely.

"You shall hear it! I consider you the epitome of everything that is mean, vile, treacherous! There is only one merit that I can see in the whole of your career, and that is its consistency! For that I give you every credit. You have, indeed, kept straight on in the path you marked out for yourself. So far as I am aware, no single deed of honesty, kindness, or unselfishness has been permitted to interfere with your uninterrupted course of wickedness! You have blighted everyone who came in your way! You have ruined lives that, but for you, might have been happy! You have rendered desolate the homes of those who had a right to count on your protection! What more can I say to give you a true idea of your own baseness?"

He winced as she spoke, not at the words themselves, but at the scathing bitterness of the tone.

She looked like an inspired prophetess as she stood there, uttering her denunciations in a loud clear voice that never faltered.

That she was in his power she did not stay to remember; she only knew that she was filled with wrath and scorn and bitterness, and that at this man's door lay the death of her sister and the ruin of her own happiness.

"You do not pause to choose your words," he said, with a forced laugh. "However, candour is a good thing in its way; and as I asked for it, I have no right to object. Out, granting all you say is true, don't you think it might be worth while to try and reform this desperate villain, to make him see the evil of his ways, and redeem the past by a better future?"

"Reform you!" she cried, with an infinity of scorn.

"Yes, I acknowledge there is a great deal of truth in what you say, but I am not so old as to be absolutely past reformation. A good woman could make anything of me, supposing she cared enough for me."

"How is it your wife failed, then? She was good."

"So she was—after a fashion; but she never really loved me. She thought she did when she married me, perhaps, but I knew better. Besides, her nature was too cold to influence mine. Now, if I married you—"

"Hush!" with a gesture of extreme loathing. "I will not listen to you!"

"But you must! You have no alternative! I tell you, Rosalind, I love you as I have never in my life loved before. You could do with me what you would, if you only thought it worth while to try."

"Which I do not," she interrupted, laconically.

He took no heed of the remark.

"It is true we are both married, but they are marriages in name only; and divorces are easy enough to obtain. Forget everything that has passed here. Come with me to America, and I will atone for my errors by a life of such devotion to you as no woman ever had before. We shall be rich, happy, and I will make you my wife!"

He came nearer, but she retreated. She felt a curious absence of horror or shame at his infamous proposals, which was due to the fact that all her thoughts were concentrated on the one great discovery she had just made.

Vansittart seemed so far beneath her contempt even, that she had grown, within the last few minutes, to regard him only as some venomous reptile, whom she could crush with her foot. She ignored the fact that reptiles can sting—fatally!

"Do not waste words by going over this ground again," she said, with superb scorn. "Nothing that you can do or say will make me regard you with less aversion."

His face darkened, the veins on his forehead stood out dark and swollen like cords. He bit fiercely at his moustache, and a minute

later sprang forward and seized her hand in his. Spite of all her efforts—and she was a strong woman—she could not escape from that powerful grasp, and his breath fell hotly on her cheeks as he bent forward.

"You are obdurate, my beautiful prisoner! You will not be wooed by fair means, therefore we must try foul. You have said I am consistent in my line of action, and I will act up to the character you have given me. Do you know why I told you this story of your sister? Because I wished you to see that I never fail—that when I strike I strike home. My love for Maraquita died when I found she cared for Hawtreys, otherwise I would have made her mine in spite of herself even, but vengeance contented me. What I wish to impress upon you is that my love for you is no schoolboy's fancy, but a passion that dominates my whole being. I will conquer you yet, my Moorish princess, in spite of your scorn—in spite of yourself!"

At that moment the sound of a voice below, sharply calling his name, reminded Vansittart that Diana had returned, and supper was waiting.

He released his hold of Rosalind's hands and muttered a low curse as his eyes fell on the jewel-box, which she, too, must have seen, though, of course, she did not recognise it. However, it was no use cursing his own imprudence now, and he consoled himself with the reflection that Rosalind would have no chance of making use of her knowledge, seeing that in less than forty-eight hours she would be on her way to America.

Accordingly, without more ado, he lifted the box into the safe, then closed the latter with the spring. After that, he turned again to Rosalind:

"As you have been clever and persevering enough to effect an entrance into this room, you shall be permitted to remain in it; but I cannot comfort you with the assurance that it is any the less well guarded than the adjoining one. Still, it gives you a larger area for exercise, so perhaps your labour has not been thrown away!" saying which he made her a low bow and departed, taking care to lock the door and put the key in his pocket as he went.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

Sir Kenneth was painfully disturbed by the unexpected mention of his wife's name, and her connection with the murder of Fulke Marchant. His dignity would not allow him to hold any further parley with Mr. Causton, but he resolved to fathom that mystery, if only for the sake of his own name, which Rosalind bore.

"She herself is nothing to me," he muttered, after the lawyer had gone, and he was left alone. "She is no more than the veriest stranger; but I must not let my name be dragged into the mire of publicity, neither must I allow her to be persecuted by a false accusation—for it is absurd to suppose that she had anything to do with the murder. In spite of her behaviour to me I cannot forget that I am her protector, and I will do my duty, for duty's sake."

But how to set about the difficult task of finding Rosalind! He had neither seen her nor heard from her—to the best of his belief—since their parting in the wood on their wedding day—for of course he knew nothing of her former residence at Weir Cottage; and to look for her in London was about as hopeful a task as hunting for the proverbial needle in a bottle of hay!

Nevertheless, to London he resolved to go, and, having made up his mind, he lost no time in carrying his resolutions into effect, for he went at once into the village, ordered a trap, returned, and packed up such few things as he thought it necessary to take with him, and at seven o'clock was at the railway station, taking a ticket for town.

While he was in the booking-office he saw Mr. Causton, who had reluctantly torn him-

# Liver Troubles and Headache



A SUFFERER FROM  
SICK HEADACHE

Mrs. Henry Wood, 18, Saunders St., Stockbridge, Edinburgh, speaking to an Edinburgh reporter, said:

"In November last I had a very bad bilious attack. Prior to that my health had been so excellent, I could almost say I had had scarcely a day's illness in my life. On taking to bed I thought I should be all right in a day or two. Days passed, however, and I grew weaker and weaker, and eventually I became so bad that I consulted three doctors, but without receiving any benefit from their treatment. I had terrible sick headaches, could neither eat nor sleep, and was very liable to faint. I attended Edinburgh Dispensary, and tried every medicine I could think of, but with no good result. I grew weaker almost every day. A little while ago I read of an account of a cure effected by Bile Beans for Biliousness in a case like my own. I then determined to try Bile Beans, and found that I derived so much benefit from the first week's course, that

I persevered, and after having given myself a thorough course, I found that my troublesome complaints were leaving me. Eventually I was completely cured, and transformed from a sickly woman to a robust and healthy person."

Bile Beans for Biliousness are a certain cure for Headache, Influenza, Constipation, Piles, Liver Trouble, Bad Breath, Rheumatism, Colds, Liver Chill, Indigestion, Flatulence, Dizziness, Buzzing in the Head, Debility, Anæmia, and all Female Ailments. Of all Chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Company, 119, London Wall, London, E.C., on receipt of price 1s. 1jd. and 2s. 9d. per Box. (Large Box contains three times quantity small size.)

## SAMPLE BOX FREE.

The Proprietors have so much faith in the efficacy of Bile Beans that they will forward a Sample Box free, and a Book on Liver and Digestive Ailments, if you send your name and address, and a Penny Stamp (to cover return postage), along with accompanying Coupon, to the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co.'s Central Distributing Depot, Greek Street, Leeds.

FREE SAMPLE  
COUPON.  
LONDON READER,  
NOV. 8TH, 1902.

**Zam-Buk**  
OINTMENT

CHARLES FORDE'S  
GREAT HERBAL REMEDY.  
"ZAM-BUK"

For Running Sores, Piles, Cuts, Burns, Bruises, Eczema, etc.

1/1½ per box. Free Sample Box from the proprietors, The Bile Bean Manufacturing Company, Greek Street, Leeds, if 1d. stamp is sent to cover return postage.

**BILE  
BEANS  
FOR  
BILIOUSNESS**



self away from the charms of Weir Cottage and Janet, and was also on his way to London. It chanced, quite inadvertently, that the two men were put into the same compartment—a first-class smoking carriage—of which they were the sole occupants. Sir Kenneth curtly returned the lawyer's salutation, then lighted a cigar, and soon became absorbed in the columns of the evening paper.

Mr. Causton, however, was not to be put off so lightly. He had made a mistake, and he determined to rectify it; but he waited patiently until the Baronet had exhausted the newspaper and thrown it down with a little yawn of impatience, and then he said, frankly,

"Sir Kenneth, I wish to apologise for my indiscretion of this evening—you must attribute it to professional fervour. It assuredly had no personal basis."

Sir Kenneth bowed, but made no remark, and Mr. Causton went on,—

"At the same time I tell you candidly that I shall continue my endeavours to find out where Lady Hawtrey is, and I do not despair of success."

This observation the Baronet took not the slightest notice of, and the rest of the journey was made in silence. On arriving at Paddington Sir Kenneth got into a hansom, and drove to a private hotel in Piccadilly; and then, feeling stiff and cramped from travelling, and as it was too late to take any steps towards the discovery of Rosalind, he strolled out into Piccadilly, mentally contrasting its busy aspect with the undisturbed quiet of the scenes he had just left.

All at once, amongst the many faces flashing past him, he saw one that he recognised—a fair, handsome, evil face, with a mocking smile curving the lips under the heavy moustache—none other, in fact, than Pierce Vansittart. He was walking along rather quickly, with a cigar in his mouth, and so absorbed in thought, that he had no idea of Sir Kenneth's proximity.

The Baronet paused a moment in indecision. He wanted to see Vansittart, but such a late time of night seemed rather unfavourable for the achievement of his object.

In spite of this, however, Sir Kenneth determined to follow him, and insist on speaking to him, for he knew how uncertain Vansittart's movements were, and that if he did not catch him now there was no saying how long their meeting might be deferred.

Accordingly, he followed close in his footsteps, and was relieved to find that Vansittart's destination was his chambers, which were quite close at hand. Luckily, he never turned round, and so Sir Kenneth was able to enter the room unperceived. It was only when he closed the door—which Vansittart had left ajar—that the latter discovered his presence, and his surprise was as great as his vexation.

"May I ask the reason of this intrusion?" he said, making the best of the position, and speaking in a tone of covert insolence, while he leaned easily on the back of a chair facing the Baronet, who stood close to the door.

"I am come on an errand whose difficulty, I am quite aware, it would be hard to estimate. In a word, I am come for the purpose of making you tell the truth," rejoined the Baronet, quietly.

Vansittart bit his lip, and cast a malignant glance at the speaker.

"You are pleased to be rude, Sir Kenneth Hawtrey!"

"I fear rudeness is inseparable from candour so far as you are concerned. You must blame your own conduct, not me."

At this moment the clock on the mantelpiece struck, and Vansittart glanced up uneasily.

"I will talk to you another time, Sir Kenneth. It is late, and I have an appointment," he said, nervously.

"Your appointment must wait."

"But that is ridiculous! My appointment is of importance I would remind you."

"And so is my business."

"Surely not so important that it cannot as well be stated to-morrow!"

"I decline to trust to to-morrow. You evaded me in Devonshire, but you will not evade me here."

Vansittart looked at him from under his bent brows, and saw how stern and resolute an expression his face wore.

Evidently the Baronet had quite made up his mind that the interview should take place, and the other was keen enough to recognise this.

He threw himself into an armchair, and with a fine assumption of indifference, lighted a fresh cigar.

"All right! Cut what you have to say as short as possible. By-the-way, won't you be seated?"

"Thank you—no!"

"As you will," returned Vansittart, smugging his shoulders, and smiling superciliously. "Now, what can I do for you?"

"You can tell me the truth concerning Maraquita De Belvoir!"

Vansittart started. The coincidence struck him, and he changed countenance a little.

"The truth concerning Maraquita De Belvoir! I don't understand you. When I saw you last you asked me to show you her letters, and I told you they were destroyed. What more do you want?"

"Whether the letters were destroyed or not I cannot say; but that you shall give me a full explanation of your former relations with her I am determined. When I announced my engagement to her, you told me she had been secretly betrothed to you, and in token of it you showed me the locket you are at this moment wearing on your watch chain, besides other proofs. I did not doubt you then, but from events that have occurred since I have reason to believe you told me a lie. Maraquita died through disappointment of my apparent desertion of her."

"More fool she," sneered Vansittart.

"You will be good enough to refrain from comment," said Sir Kenneth; then his mien changed. He drew himself up. His lips set themselves in a line of stern determination. He took a step forward, and his eyes absolutely flashed fire as they met Vansittart's.

"You have lied to me and fooled me to your heart's content, but now I will not be fooled any longer. Tell me the truth. Confess that your story of being engaged to Maraquita was a fabrication, concocted for the purpose of serving your own vile ends! Speak, Pierce Vansittart! and as you value your life, speak the truth!"

His voice rang out clear and loud, like a silver clarion, and though Vansittart was no coward, he shrank back a little, with an involuntary movement of fear. Then courage returned to him, and with it a certain reckless bravado, mingled with a burning desire to humble the haughty Baronet, who, for the second time, had proved a rival to him.

He rose from his chair and faced Sir Kenneth, an evilly triumphant smile on his lips.

"You want the truth, do you? Well, you shall have it, and much good may it do you! I did tell a lie when I said Maraquita had been engaged to me, and the story of her giving me the locket as a love-token was a lie as well. But I believed then, as I believe now, that if it had not been for you she would have cared for me; and perhaps, if I had married her, I should have been a better and happier man."

"The fates were against it, and you prevailed over me, as you had done all your life long. Do you remember when we were at college together how you were always above me—not in one thing, but in everything? Do you remember how jealous I was of you, and the fight we had, which ended in your victory? See"—he pushed back the hair from his brow, and showed a small mark on his left temple—

"that is the scar of the old wound, where your ring cut me; and so long as that endures, so long my enmity to you will survive. Even then I vowed I would be even with you some

day, and it was for that reason and no other that I allowed myself to become reconciled to you, and even pretended to be friendly. I knew that as your avowed enemy I should have no chance of injuring you. It is your friend who can deal you the deadliest blow, and so I accepted an invitation to your mother's house, in order to meet you on your return from your travels, and it was then I grew to love Maraquita. Are you any the better for this confession? Is it a satisfaction for you to learn that you trampled on a woman's heart that belonged wholly to you—that for your sake that same wretched woman ended her life by her own act, and that she lies in a dishonoured grave, branded with the crime of self-murder?"

"You infamous scoundrel!" broke from Sir Kenneth's white lips.

The other was quite unmoved by the epithet, although he had worked himself up into a white heat of rage that showed itself in his twitching muscles, and unsteady hands.

Passion had got the better of him again, and he yielded himself wholly to its influence, unmindful, even, of prudence, in the desire to triumph over the man he had so long regarded as his enemy.

"Hard names don't hurt!" he sneered. "I am used to them, and heed them as little as a few drops of water on my coat. They are not the weapons I make use of, as I have already proved; and, in token of it, I will give you another piece of intelligence that will hardly tend to make you happier. You are proud of your name—proud of the heroism of the men who have borne it, and the purity of the women. What will you say when I tell you that my revenge for old wrongs is complete, inasmuch as your wife—Lady Hawtrey—is at the present moment under my roof, and on the point of eloping with me to America?"

To describe the fiendish exultation of the man as he uttered these words is as difficult as to describe their effect.

The Baronet reeled back like a drunken man, and caught hold of the corner of a table for support. But it was only for a moment he gave credence to Vansittart's assertion; then a certain innate belief in Rosalind's purity came back to him, and with it an overwhelming tide of passion against the black-hearted villain who had thus traduced her.

There are times when, even in the most civilised and refined of men, the old brute instinct asserts itself, in spite of culture—in spite, almost, of one's own nature. It was thus with Sir Kenneth now. He did not stay to reason; he felt that Vansittart had uttered a base slander, and his answer to it was a blow, dealt with a powerful hand and unerring skill, that, an instant later, stretched Vansittart senseless at his feet.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2051. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.)

#### HER COMMENT

She was so gentle and so fair.

He paused, her every word to hear,  
And when soft music touched the air

She said, in accents sweet and clear,  
"Isn't it lovely?"

The mimic scene—how it entranced!

'Twas fancy's realm brought down to earth.

She sighed, when Columbine had danced

And Harlequin began his mirth,

"Isn't it lovely?"

Again across the mountain's crest

The twilight kissed the evening star,

The crow swung, mocking, toward his nest,

She murmured, as she gazed afar,

"Isn't it lovely?"

Then sought we for more mundane joys,

Beneath the circus canvas wide,

Her voice arose o'er all the noise

When the rhinoceros she spied,

"Isn't he lovely?"

## Facetiæ

**JOB:** "I constantly stumble upon a discussion about idiocy and idiots. Are idiots really human beings?" **JACK:** "Certainly; just as much as you and I."

"Don't be a fool!" she said, with a snap, to her husband. "Why didn't you tell me that when I asked you to marry me?" he replied, and silence fell upon that house.

**WATCHFUL MOTHER:** "Rosalind, you should not stay out in the cold; you will get chapped." "Well, that's what I go out for, ain't it?" "For what, dear?" "Chaps."

**THERE** are two things in this world that we can't understand. One is that you catch a cold without trying; that if you let it run on it stays with you, and if you stop it it goes away.

**CONVALESCENT (to doctor):** "Now that I am on the road to recovery, doctor, I think you may as well send in your bill." **Physician:** "Not yet, sir. I want to avoid any risk of a relapse."

**HE:** "Aw, excuse me! 'Pon my word! I was absent-minded. Funny! Can you account for this utter absence of mind in me?" **SHE:** "No, sir, I cannot. I recognise the fact, and ask no questions."

**A LADY** once remarked to the elder Booth, who had a broken nose: "I like your acting, Mr. Booth; but, to be frank with you, I can't get over your nose." "No wonder, madam," responded he—"the bridge is gone!"

**SHE:** "Do you find writing poetry remunerative, Mr. Sissy?" **HE:** "O yes, fairly so. But I don't depend upon poetry altogether." **SHE:** "No?" **HE:** "O no. I'm salesman in a Yorkshire ribbon warehouse."

**MISS LIONFINDER** (at the ball of the diplomatic corps): "Those Heidelberg duels must be very exciting, lieutenant. I see you bear one of the scars." **Lieutenant Girsh:** "I was flattered, Mees Lionfinder, but I got dat from my—vot you call him?—donsorial surcheon, dis morning."

"I HAD no idea Sharker had so many friends in the club as he seems to have. Why, everyone looks quite down in the mouth since he went abroad." "No wonder. He forgot to make any announcement of his departure, you know, and he carried his cheque book with him."

**WIFE:** "John, what do you think of the new cook?" **Husband:** "Excellent, my dear—excellent! I never enjoyed a better meal than my dinner to-day. Where did you ever manage to find such a remarkable good-looking young woman, anyway?" "In just five minutes by the watch the cook was informed that she might find another place."

**WIFE:** "Great heavens, Cranston! Don't deny it; I saw you kiss her!" **Husband** (stiffly): "You are mistaken. She kissed me." **Wife:** "But why did you let her?" **Husband:** "I couldn't be rude to a lady." **Wife:** "But why did she want to kiss you?" **Husband:** "I can't imagine. You ought to know."

**YOUNG HUSBAND:** "It does seem to me you might learn how to cook better than that; my mother—" **Young Wife:** "There, that will do; I refrain from learning how to cook on principle?" "Oh, you do; thinking of me, of course?" "No; of my son." "Son?" "Yes; I don't intend he shall ever make any nice girl miserable bragging about my cooking."

**LITTLE DICK:** "I'm awful glad you is engaged to sister Nell, now." **Mr. Nicsefellow:** "I feel quite grateful to hear you say that, Dick." "Little Dick: "Yes, you always bring her sweets, and she gives me some, and it's the kind I like, too." **Mr. Nicsefellow:** "You have a choice, then?" "Little Dick: "Oh, yes. You see all the others brought chocolates, and I don't like chocolate."

**GENTLEMAN (to a beggar):** "Why, I have just given you something!" **Beggar:** "Yes, that was for playing the fiddle; but I also do something in the begging line."

"How can I find out all about the young lady to whom I am engaged?" asked a prospective Benedict. "The simplest way would be to marry her," answered his friend.

**A LITTLE GIRL**, when asked by her mother about suspicious little bites in the sides of a dozen choice apples, answered: "Perhaps, mamma, they might have been frost-bitten; it was so cold last night."

**APPROPRIATE AS A RULE.**—Organist: "As your party marches down the aisle I will play some impressive march." Prospective bridegroom: "That's good; but be particular about the key." Organist: "Oh, certainly. I invariably play wedding marches in B flat; two flats seem so appropriate."

**A MIMIC MATRIMONIAL CIRCUS.**—Little Dot: "Mamma, Dick and I got married this morning." Mamma: "You did, did you? Who performed the ceremony?" "I don't know what you's talkin' about." "Well, how did you make out you were married?" "Oh! Why, I got my dishes an' set the table, an' then we both sat down, an' he said there wasn't a thing fit to eat, an' I said he was as ugly as could be, an' he went out an' slammed the door."

**ENGAGING A SERVANT.**—Housekeeper: "Are you a good washer and ironer?" Applicant: "Please, mum, the last family I was with sent their wash to the laundry." "Can you make bread?" "Most folks buy of the bakers nowadays, mum." "I suppose you can sweep?" "The lady used to do that, mum, with a carpet-sweeper." "Well, I suppose you at least know how to wash dishes?" "Indade, mum, if it's a common dishwasher ye want ye better be after hirin' a scullion. Good day, mum."

"Is he a young man of brains?" inquired an old gentleman respecting a swell youth. "Well, really," replied his daughter, "I have had no opportunity of judging. I never met him anywhere except in society."

**NIGHT-CAPS ARE NOT DUTIABLE.**—Customs Officer: "What have you in that parcel?" "Only my laundry." "Open it and let me see!" Man reluctantly opens package, disclosing shirts, collars, cuffs, etc., and a bottle. "I thought you had nothing but laundry in that paper. What's in the bottle?" "Night-caps." "Pass on, sir."

**GERMAN COUNTESS:** "Baron, will you give me a photograph of yourself?" Baron: "Certainly, madame; you flatter me by asking for it." Countess (after the baron's departure, to her waiting-maid): "Here, Claire, put this picture in your album, where you can study the features closely. Whenever the original of it calls, tell him I am out."

**YOUNG PERKINS** (exasperated): "Ethel, in a few days I shall be far, far away." Ethel (laughingly): "How far?" Young Perkins (desperately): "I know not—thousands of miles, perhaps. To-morrow night I shall leave this house, perhaps for ever." Ethel (with interest): "What's the matter with you to-night, that you should give to-morrow night the preference?"

**HE WAS COURTING.**—One day a drill-sergeant in the army had a number of recruits to drill, and wanted the married men separated from the single ones, so he formed them in line and gave the word of command: "Single men, advance; and married men, fall back in the rear." All took their positions except one, an Irishman, who stood still. The sergeant asked the reason why he had not moved, but no answer came from Pat. "Come, my man, are you married?" "No," replied Pat. "Then you are single?" "No." "Then what are you?" "I am courting Sally." The sergeant collapsed.

Keep the Blood Pure

By Taking

FRAZER'S TABLETS.

IF YOU TAKE

# FRAZER'S TABLETS

You derive the greatest possible benefit in health and strength. Your blood is made rich and full of vitality, and in consequence the body becomes healthy and strong.

## THOUSANDS CAN PROVE

The beneficial properties of FRAZER'S TABLETS

### Eczema, Rheumatism, Constipation, and all Blood and Skin Disorders.

### PHYSICIANS RECOMMEND THEM EXTENSIVELY.

Frazer's Tablets can be obtained of all Chemists in pale green boxes, with the words FRAZER'S TABLETS in GOLD LETTERS on the lid, Price 1s. 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. per box, or post free 1s. 3d. from

## FRAZER'S TABLETS, LTD.,

95, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.



VAN DABBLE: "This is my latest picture; I sold it yesterday." Visitor: "Indeed? You are a genius!"

TEACHER: "Say 'they aren't' or 'they are not.' You must never say 'they ain't.'" Tommy: "Why not?" Teacher: "Because it ain't proper, that's why."

MRS. BONES: "Your husband, I hear, is quite versatile." Mrs. Brown-Smythe: "Versatile is no name for it. Why, he can actually stay out late every night in the week and not give the same excuse twice."

NELL: "I stepped in at a bargain sale today." Belle: "Did you see anything that looked very cheap?" Nell: "Yes; several men waiting for their wives."

IN LOVE WITH PING PONG.—"Here's a letter from Mirandy, at college." She says she's in love with Ping Pong. "She is, hey? Well she'd better give him up. We ain't goin' ter stand fer no Chinaman marryin' inter this family."

"Augustus, dear," said the gentle girl, tenderly pushing him from her as the moonlight flooded the bay window where they were standing. "I think you had better try some other hair dye; your moustache tastes like turpentine."

DOCTOR: "You must take more exercise. What is your business?" Patient: "I am an insurance agent." Doctor: "Then you ought to get plenty of exercise." Patient: "That depends. You see, sometimes we work on commission and sometimes on salary."

IT DEPENDED ON CIRCUMSTANCES.—Frivolous young lady (to guide: "How deep is this hole?") Guide: "Never been measured, miss." Frivolous young lady: "Suppose I were to fall down there, where do you suppose I should go to?" Guide: "That depends, miss, upon how you have lived in this world!"

SHE WAS DELIGHTED.—Managing Mamma: "Of all things! So you have declined a drive with young Mr. Richfellow, when you know he will go right off and invite your rival, Miss Pert?" Wise Daughter: "Yes, ma; and I am delighted to think that it is just what he will do." "You must be crazy! What can be your object?" "I want him to see how horribly red her nose gets in cold weather."

TO SOOTHE THE SAVAGE BREAST.—"Mary! suppose you sing something." "Oh, it's so late, Charley. I'm afraid it'll awake every one." "That's too bad," exclaimed Charley, with every appearance of distress. "But why do you want me to sing, dear?" she tenderly inquired. "Why, you see," he replied, "a fellow I owe two pounds to has been waiting outside all the evening for me, and I thought maybe if you'd sing a little he'd go away."

PRETTY BIG JOKE FOR BOBBY.—Miss Clara (to young Featherly, a guest at dinner): "Won't you have an orange, Mr. Featherly?" Featherly: "Oh, thanks, awfully." Bobby (turning to his mother): "How's that, ma?" Mother: "How is what, Bobby?" Bobby: "Mr. Featherly took an orange from Clara!" Mother: "There, there, Bobby: little boys shouldn't talk at the table." Bobby: "Yes, ma, but you said that Mr. Featherly's visits here, so far as Clara is concerned, would be fruitless."

NO SUCH THING AS JUSTICE.—"There is no such thing as justice in this world," said Colonel Yegger to Judge Pennybunker. "What makes you talk that way?" asked Pennybunker. "An item I was reading in the paper." "What was it about?" "A young man promised to marry a girl, but he didn't keep his promise." "What was done to him?" "He was imprisoned for six months." "What injustice is there in that?" "Lots of it. He was deprived of his liberty for six months because he broke his promise to marry a girl, whereas the man who keeps his promise to marry is usually deprived of his liberty for life."

## Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

*The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.*

*All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.*

JUANITE.—A lady should always thank her escort for his kindness in attending her at a ball or other entertainment. "She can do so in a few simple, complimentary words, expressive of her appreciation of the pleasure afforded."

HAROLD.—A gentleman seldom wears more than one ring—a cameo or seal ring on the little finger of the left hand or the finger next it. A gentleman may wear gloves in summer without seeming effeminate. If he is a physician, a musician, or an artist, he should keep his hands from roughening contact, so as not to lose delicacy of touch.

SCHOLAR.—It is more difficult to acquire the rudiments of Hebrew than those of Latin or Greek, but it would be possible to attain to a knowledge of Hebrew, which would entitle its possessor to a respectable place among scholars, in less time than would be needed to secure a similar knowledge of Greek or Latin. The reason of this is that the range of Hebrew literature is comparatively small.

ORATOR.—You should study several elementary school grammars and rhetorics carefully, not following any one of them implicitly, but comparing them where they differ, and if you are fortunate enough to have some frank friend a little better educated than yourself, who will undertake to note and correct your faults in speaking and writing, you will improve more quickly under such tuition than by any amount of unassisted study.

FRED.—Unless engaged to be married a young lady has a perfect right to attend the theatre or other places of amusement with other gentleman acquaintances, if properly chaperoned.

BORLASE.—Ask the young lady, as soon as possible, whether she loves you well enough to promise to wait for you until you are in a position to marry her, and whether she will accept and wear a ring as a token of your engagement. If she says "yes," and allows you to put the ring on her hand, and if then you have no emotions the expression of which will make an appropriate speech for the occasion, there would be no use in anyone's trying to teach you what to say.

**DON'T COUGH for  
KEATING'S LOZENGES  
EASILY CURE  
THE WORST COUGH.**

One gives relief. An increasing sale of over 80 years is a certain test of their value. Sold in 134d. tins everywhere.

**KEARSLEY'S 15-YEARS REPUTATION  
WIDOW WELCH'S  
FEMALE PILLS**

Awarded Certificate of Merit for the cure of Irregularities, Anemia, and all Female Complaints. They have the approval of the Medical Profession. Beware of imitations. The only genuine and original are in White Paper Wrappers. Boxes, 1s. 14d. and 2s. 6d. of all Chemists. 2s. 6d. box contains three times the pills. Or by post 1s. 6d. or 2s. stamps, by the makers, C. and G. KEARSLEY, 17, North Street, Westminster. Sold in the Colonies.

## THE DIRECT Photo-Engraving Co.

(F. E. S. PERRY).

**38, Farringdon Street,  
LUDGATE CIRCUS, E.C.**

Photo Engravers and Etchers in Line and Half-Tone.  
Photo-Process Blocks of every description on Zinc or Copper  
for Newspaper, Magazine, Book and General Illustration.  
Catalogues for every Business illustrated and Printed.  
Photographers Sent to all Parts.

## Collotype Printing

For Fine Art and Commercial Purposes.

Prices and Specimens on Application.

The Illustrations in "THE LONDON READER" are reproduced by the Company.

**COUNTRY LASS.**—The best cosmetic for the hands is glycerine acidulated with a little fresh lemon juice.

**IN DOUBT.**—To detect chalk in milk, dilute the milk with water; the chalk, if there be any, will settle to the bottom in an hour or two; put to the sediment an acid—vinegar, for instance—and if effervescence takes place, it is chalk.

**E.M.**—"Annuals" were richly-bound volumes, published annually, containing poetry, tales, and essays, by eminent authors, and illustrated by engravings. The first appeared in London in 1823. There were imitations of similar books in Germany.

**NERVOUS ANNIE.**—Arsenic is a deadly poison, and as a matter of course deleterious effects will be sure to follow the use of arsenical compounds, no matter how infinitesimally it may be associated with other ingredients. When given under the advice of your family physician the case assumes a different phase.

**LIONEL.**—A good varnish for maps and pictures is made of Canada balsam and rectified oil of turpentine in equal parts, mixed. Set the bottle containing the mixture in warm water and agitate until the solution is perfect. Then set in a warm place to settle, and when settled pour off the clear varnish for use.

**ROSINA.**—A good leather polish is made as follows:—Take two ounces of mutton suet, six ounces of beeswax, six ounces of powdered sugar candy, two ounces of soft soap, and one ounce of lampblack. Dissolve the soap in a quarter of a pint of water; then add the other ingredients; melt and mix together; add a gill of turpentine. Lay it on the leather with a sponge and polish off with a brush. It is an excellent polish for harness or leather in any form.

**ANXIOUS TO KNOW.**—It is impossible to answer your questions without knowing more of the circumstances than can be gathered from your letter. As a rule, one should be very careful not to appear to ask for invitations, but if for any reason you should wish to do so, it is better to ask boldly for what you want rather than to do or say anything which would look like "fishing for an invitation." In this case if you can give the lady an opportunity of withdrawing the invitation you should do so.

**STUDENT.**—In choosing a trade or profession a young man should be governed by his natural aptitude for any particular thing. The time required for learning one depends upon the study and attention given it. To be a civil engineer requires a natural talent and a course of instruction in what pertains to the business. One wishing to be a physician should have a leaning that way. He may study anatomy, chemistry, etc., under a physician as a preparation, and then take a course or two of lectures in a medical college.

**LILIAN.**—You did wrong to repeat to your lover the unpleasant remark made of him by your sister. If he was proud and sensitive he has no doubt brooded over it; and it was natural he should, while smarting under the hurt, write as he did. The fact that you cherished the remark in your memory and thought so little of his feelings as to repeat it to him made him feel sore against you. Write and ask him to come to see you, and then pass it off lightly as you can and be gentler and sweeter to him than before.

**TRE.**—You must first get the dandruff away from the scalp, or the hair will not grow healthily. As it adheres so firmly to the skin of the head, some patience will be required to move it. The following is an excellent remedy, and I advise you to try it, though I do not say that one application will be successful:—Tincture of cantharides, 2 drachms; tincture of quillaia, 2 drachms; glycerine, 4 drachms; pure alcohol, 4 drachms; water, 6 ounces. Mix well and shake the mixture each time before applying. I would advise its use each night until all trace of the dandruff is removed.

**EDITH.**—I do not see any objection to the union excepting the young lady's age. I think she would do well to wait several years before thinking of wedding any one. Her weight is too great for her size, and I advise her to take plenty of outdoor exercise.

**ANNIE.**—In the eye of the law the Indian originally held an anomalous position, neither citizen nor alien, and incapable of becoming a citizen; but the disabilities have been removed, and Indians are now enabled to leave their tribes or renounce the tribal system as a body, and become citizens.

**KENNETH.**—The seven Bibles of the world are the Koran, of the Mohammedans, the Tri Pitakes of the Buddhists, the Five Kings of the Chinese, the Three Vedas of the Hindoos, the Eddas of the Scandinavians, the Zendavesta (or Zend Avesta) of the Persians, and the Scriptures of the Christians.

**MEDICOS.**—The bark of sassafras root is stimulant, and perhaps diaphoretic; though its possession of any peculiar tendency to the skin, independently of its mere excitant property, is very doubtful. A kind of tea is made from it, which is used as a domestic medicine, and is thought to purify the blood. The bark chewed in excess is injurious to the teeth.

**A. READ.**—To make a good typewriter, the person learning should have a fair education, particularly in regard to spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Many may find it comparatively easy to learn, while others may take a long time to acquire the proficiency necessary to get steady work and good pay. The time spent in the study of typewriting varies with the aptitude of the beginner. Three months will suffice for some, so many hours a day being devoted to practice, while others may require six months to understand thoroughly the mechanism of the machine used, and to do the work required quickly and well.

**GEORGE.**—The term Quaker was first applied to members of the Society of Friends in derision. George Fox once bade a persecuting magistrate to "tremble at the name of the Lord," whereupon the official jeeringly called him a Quaker. The epithet thus fastened upon Fox has adhered to his followers to this day. A Quaker once was summoned to the presence of King Charles II., and the king, observing that the Quaker kept his hat on, removed his own. The Quaker asked, "Why does your Majesty remove your hat?" The king humourously replied, "It is customary for only one person at a time to wear a hat in this place."

**LAUGHING WATER.**—The lyre-bird is so named from the form of its tail. There are three kinds of feathers in the tail, which are long, and sixteen in number. Twelve have long, slender shafts, with delicate filaments more and more distant towards the end; the middle two feathers, longer than the rest, are pointed at the ends, and barbed only on the inner edge; the external two feathers are broad, growing wider to the ends, and curving outward like an elongated S, the two resembling much the outline of the ancient lyre. These singular birds (natives of Australia) live in pairs in rocky places overgrown with bushes. Their motions are graceful, the males displaying the tail feathers like a peacock.

**VIRGINIA.**—To make angel cake, take one-half tumbler of granulated sugar, one tumbler of sifted flour, one teaspoonful of vanilla, and one teaspoonful of cream of tartar; sift the flour four times, add the cream of tartar, and sift again. Sift the sugar and measure; beat the whites of seven eggs to a stiff froth; then add the sugar lightly, a little at a time; then the flour the same way, and then the vanilla. Do not stop beating until you put it in the pan to bake. Bake it forty minutes in a moderate oven, not opening the doors for the first fifteen minutes. Try it, and if not done, let it stand for a few minutes longer. The tumbler must hold two and a quarter gills. Put the icing on the cake as soon as it is taken from the oven.

**DICK.**—Many people think that gutta-percha and indiarubber are the same or very similar gums. This, however, is a mistake. Indiarubber is the solidified sap of a South American tree. It is of a soft, gummy nature; not tenacious, but very elastic; is easily decomposed by oily substances, and does not stand acids well. Gutta-percha, which is found only in the East Indies, is obtained from the gutta tree. It is a brownish gum, which solidifies by exposure to the air.

THE LONDON READER is sent to any part of the world, post free Three-halfpence Weekly, or Quarterly, One Shilling and Eightpence.

\* \* ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 50-52, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.

\* \* We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.  
**EPPS'S**  
GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.  
**COCOA**  
BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

**FALLING EYELASHES**  
spoil the beauty of the fairest face, and deprive the eyes of their defence against dirt and dust. The eyelashes are strengthened and restored by **SINGLETON'S EYE OINTMENT**, a remedy with 300 years' reputation. Supplied by chemists and stores in ancient pedestal pots for 2/- each. A little book "How to Preserve the Eyesight" will be sent to any applicant by **STEPHEN GREEN** 210, Lambeth Rd., London. All who suffer from any eye trouble should send for it.

**A FRIEND IN NEED**  
is a friend indeed, and woman's unfailing friend is  
**Towle's PENNYROYAL PILLS.**  
They correct and alleviate all distressing symptoms from which women so often suffer.  
Boxes, 1/6, 2/6 (contains three times the quantity), and large size 4/6, of all Chemists. Or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 2/6, 3/6, or 5/- stamps, by **E. T. TOWLE & CO.**, 66, Long Row, Nottingham.  
*Beware of Injurious Imitations*

**HAVE YOU GOT A BOX OF WHELPTON'S PILLS?**  
**IF NOT, WHY NOT?**  
THEY CURE  
**HEADACHE, INDIGESTION, BILE, CONSTIPATION, INVALUABLE TO LADIES.**  
Of all Chemists, 7½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 6d. per box.  
**G. WHELPTON & SON,**  
3 & 4, Crane Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.